

I write what we like: A textual analysis of Fallist microblogging

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Abstract

Fallists belong to a constellation of radical student activist movements that pledge to disturb and reimagine South African society. Rather than restricting themselves to coordinated forms of collective action, Fallists' advance their "revolution-as-becoming" within a context of everyday resistance (Haynes & Prakash, 1991; Molefe, 2015). In this dissertation, I propose that Fallists form an "emerging networked counterpublic" made up of individual activists that enact everyday forms of resistance on Twitter (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:399). This dissertation explores the use of Twitter by a microblogger who has emerged organically as a "crowdsourced elite" among Fallists (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). I contend that this microblogger exemplifies the repertoires of communication and resistance that pervade within Fallist networks on Twitter (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016). The microblogger is identified through methods of observation and social network analysis (SNA). "#whitetip," a Twitter hashtag network that exemplifies Fallist communication and resistance, informs the interpretive content analysis that follows. This analysis is conducted on the tweets that the microblogger broadcast between 1 April and 30 September 2016. Tweets are categorised according to "evaluative frames" that emerged inductively during the course of analysis. I find that "resentment," "pride and care," and "play" made up the vast majority of evaluative frames. The microblogger employs the platform in a manner that disturbs dominant understandings of public sphere communication: the microblogger's tweets are evaluative rather than deliberative, and assert a marginal, embodied subjectivity (Papacharissi, 2014; Warner, 2002).

Introduction

Under the banner of Fallism, black South African students have declared the born-free generation illusory. Fallists comprise a constellation of radical student activist movements that pledge to disturb and reimagine South African society. Pursuing a decolonial agenda, Fallists draw from Black Feminist and Black Consciousness traditions (Kim, 2016). Fallists remain oppositional in the face of dominant constructions of knowledge and authority (Collins, 1998:88). At the same time, they resolve to cultivate self-consciousness in the ongoing “quest for a true humanity” unbridled by domination (Biko, 1978:92; MacDonald, 2012). Fallism names the heuristic process through which students are opposing dominant stances, practices, and subjectivities, and expounding new ones in their wake; this process makes up a “revolution-as-becoming” (Molefe, 2015:32).

The Fallist revolution-as-becoming encompasses not only “extraordinary moments of collective protest,” but also informal forms of “everyday resistance” (Haynes & Prakash, 1991:1). Fallists enact everyday resistance through social networking sites (SNSs); using these online platforms, Fallists claim networked communicative contexts of their own and “move their voices from the margins to the centre” of public discourse (Gunn, 2015:21). SNSs enable a structure of communication that Rainie & Wellman describe as “networked individualism,” in that “people function more as connected individuals and less as embedded group members” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012:12). The “microblogging” medium on Twitter is crucial for Fallists, since it privileges “the sharing of opinion and information rather than reciprocal social interaction” (Hughes et al, 2012:561). Microblogging consists of brief user-generated messages that are usually broadcast publicly on Twitter (Murthy, 2013). Microblogging thus transcends tightly bound networks, since messages are directed towards “imagined audiences” (Marwick & boyd, 2010). Through microblogging, the Twitter platform encourages the cultivation of “micro-celebrity” online, which can be harnessed by activists who become “organically emerging leaders” (Page, 2012; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

I propose that Fallists form “emerging networked counterpublics” in which individual activists enact everyday forms of resistance through Twitter (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:399). I apply Hutchby’s framework of “technological affordances” that both enable and constrain social action (2001:453). I argue that the unique affordances of microblogging on Twitter are conducive to Fallists’ everyday resistance. This dissertation explores the use of Twitter by a Fallist microblogger who has emerged organically as a “crowdsourced elite” within the network (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012:273). This individual’s tweets make up the “focal texts” of the study (Ahuvia, 2001). The individual and their tweets are

anonymised, in line with the ethical prerogatives of harm- and vulnerability-minimisation (Markham and Buchanan, 2012). Observation and social network analysis (SNA) techniques are employed in order to identify this microblogger, who has established popularity and influence within Fallist Twitter networks. Over a six-month period, I analyse the tweets broadcast by the microblogger as a case study into the emerging Fallist “revolution-as-becoming” (Molefe, 2015: 32). Using an interpretive content analysis method, I categorise the tweets according to what I term, “evaluative frames.” I expound this framework in the methodology section below. Framing describes the active process in which communicators interpret reality, by identifying problems and solutions (Pointer, 2015: 25-26). Various evaluative frames emerged during the organisation phase of the content analysis, described in greater detail below.

Two qualitative research questions are posed in this dissertation:

- I. What kinds of evaluative frames were made by the crowdsourced elite microblogger?
- II. How did Twitter set the parameters of the microblogger’s communication and resistance?

The study consists of five main sections: the introduction, literature and conceptual review, methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusion. The introduction section situates Fallist movements in the context of post-apartheid South African society, and identifies “everyday resistance” as an overarching framework with which to interpret the movements. I provide an overview of the Fallist paradigm, which is based on the idea of “revolution-as-becoming” (Molefe, 2015:32). The second section consists of the literature review and conceptual review, which is broken into three parts: the first two parts focus on theories of communication in the public sphere. Habermas’s ideas provide a point of entry into conceptualising the public sphere. Habermas’s concepts of deliberation, communicative reason, and rational-critical debate are described and subsequently challenged. Engagements by critical feminist scholars provide insight into Fallists and their networked brand of communication and resistance on Twitter. Scholarship on “actualized publics” follows this, and I offer an overview of the kinds of publics that are pertinent to Fallism (Ahva, 2011:123). I argue that Fallists disturb the model of the public sphere envisaged by Habermas. The third part of this section focuses on Twitter in terms of its technological affordances for communication, resistance, and protest that are inflected by networked individualism.

The next section covers research methodology. The first part of this section describes the exploratory stage of the research that was based on observation and social network analysis (SNA). I provide an overview of the interpretive content analysis method, which is qualitative and emphasises “theoretical sensitivity” (Ahuvia, 2001; Drisko and Maschi, 2015; Glaser, 1978). The fourth section consists of findings and discussion. Following a period of observation, I collected and analysed the “#whitetip” Twitter network, consisting of tweets that included the hashtag, “#whitetip” between 2 May and 9 May. While a lengthier discussion of this phenomenon occurs in the findings section below, #whitetip was

coined online to describe the fallout from a confrontation between Fallist activists and a waitress in Cape Town. Using the data collected from this network, I argue that #whitetip exemplifies Fallist communication and resistance. In addition, #whitetip revealed a “crowdsourced elite” microblogger who was both popular and influential within the network (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). The findings from analysing the #whitetip network prompted an interpretive content analysis of this central microblogger’s tweets. Finally, the conclusion summarises findings and proposes some directions for future research. Directly below, I identify the rationale and significance of the dissertation.

1.1 Significance and rationale

As a student at UCT during 2015 and 2016, I have closely followed the movements from their embryonic stages through to the present: from the initial defacement of the Rhodes statue in March 2015, to the #FeesMustFall campaigns of both years, to the emergence of the #ShackvilleTRC movement in 2016, up to current discussions surrounding the future of Fallism. These events have naturally prompted me to engage in dialogues with peers, attend plenaries and protests, as well as observe online discussions. I have been invigorated, challenged, and, at times, unsettled, by the radical energies brimming from the movements. My proximity to the movements has triggered a more thorough reckoning with the relations of privilege and oppression that contour life in South Africa and elsewhere, as well as the extent to which I am imbricated in these relations.

Emerging only within the past two years, there remains a dearth of academic writing on the Fallist movements. Few scholars (Baragwanath, 2016; Bosch, 2017; Luescher, Loader, & Mugume, 2016) have yet explored the connection between social networking sites and communication among Fallists. The above studies limit their scope to specific protest campaigns; while this provides insight into formal mobilisation dynamics, this focus evades consideration of Fallists who form emergent digitally-mediated discursive communities (Herring, 2004) and budding “networked counterpublics” that are negotiated in the context of everyday life (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:399). I intend to bridge this gap by exploring the use of Twitter by one “crowdsourced elite” microblogger, who openly identifies as a Fallist, over a six-month period. In the analysis, I heed Christians’ (2007) cultural continuity imperative. The study takes the broad lens of everyday resistance as a point of departure to probe the microblogger’s use of Twitter. I aim to contribute to the “provincializing” of digital media, by deepening understandings of particular practices and ways of being in the world online (Coleman, 2010:489). I hope this dissertation will contribute to cultural studies, political communication, and feminist digital media studies research.

1.2 Post-apartheid developments

Out of a “legacy of deep division”, South African political elites negotiated the mostly peaceful transition from apartheid repression to liberal constitutional democracy (Doxtader & Villa-Vicencio, 2004:xvii). Incumbent leaders aimed to provide a sterling example of “democracy won at the negotiating table” and testify to the transformative power of deliberation and reconciliation (Salazar, 2002). Through nationally synchronised “media events” and rhetoric, political leaders constructed a collective memory of apartheid and charted a future to honour the founding virtues of the new South Africa (Evans, 2014:26). This was exemplified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which devised a “third way” between blanket amnesty and protracted criminal trials for apartheid’s violent perpetrators (Tutu, 1999:34). Formulated expressly to “promote national unity and reconciliation,” the TRC aimed to facilitate national healing by imploring South Africans to forgive past atrocities. In practice, the TRC process imposed an onus upon survivors to suppress negative emotions and “paper over a level of resentment yet to impact the long-term peace process” (Villa-Vicencio, 2004:71). By positioning “reconciliation” as a touchstone of post-apartheid South Africa, political leaders established a framework of collective memory which marginalised or repressed alternative understandings (Gqola, 2001a:98).

When Desmond Tutu coined the term “rainbow nation” to describe South Africa, he aimed to steer the deeply fractured polity away from the calamities of the past and towards a unified focus on nation building. Tutu’s epideictic rhetoric of the “Rainbow Nation of God” strove to perform the nation into existence (Salazar, 2002:12). Tutu “conjured a vision of ethnic diversity and harmony” (Bell, 2001). Political elites and media alike subsequently embraced the expression, intent on fostering reconciliation and the emergent South African national political consciousness (Baines, 1998; Habib, 1997). Adhering to a liberal multiculturalist discursive framework, the concept of the rainbow nation promotes respect for difference without interrogating its material and socially constructed foundations. The rainbow, as a visual metaphor, conveys a dispersed assemblage of inert bodies, and evades sophisticated deconstruction of power, identities and subjectivities. As Neville Alexander has articulated, the rainbow metaphor lacks usefulness because it captures a “sense of unchanging, eternal, and God-given identities” rather than dynamic, socially constructed ones (cited by Ruiters, 2009:106).

The pursuit of a neoliberal policy agenda in South Africa has given way to a “bifurcated economy” with inequality even more intense than during apartheid (Finn, Leibrandt & Woolard, 2013; Mattes, 2011). Race continues to contour South African society in profound ways; within neighbourhoods and public spaces alike, interracial interaction remains limited (Muyeba & Seekings, 2011). As Reddy points out, in South Africa, “the hope of a non-racial future, inspired by the transition to a liberal democratic constitutional order, has wrestled against the guttural anger and hatred that also motivated and sustained

the struggle against apartheid” (2015:13). The South African public sphere is defined by “discursive battles” between these two paradigms, which stipulate different realms of progress and different subjects of political action (Reddy, 2015:6). The dominant liberal paradigm stresses the importance of protecting civil society as a conduit of deliberative politics and dispute resolution. Institutions of representative democracy inform leadership structures and decision making. This discourse interpellates middle-class subjectivity, which is historically linked to the white minority of South Africans. The second paradigm, aligned with the nationalist struggle, interpellates the subaltern Black masses. Through a politics of race consciousness and populism, “solidarities from South Africa’s settler colonial history” find an expression in collective mobilisation (Reddy, 2015:38).

Widely conceived as spared the traumas of institutional segregation and violence inherent to the apartheid era, today’s students were raised in a relatively stable democratic South Africa. Popularly hailed the “born free generation,” this group is in part composed of the nascent “Black middle class,” who, compared to their parents’ generation, grew up with unprecedented access to elite schools and economic growth (Mattes, 2011:7). Long attached to notions of “newness,” they have been “lauded as South Africa’s main chance to shake off a legacy of racism” (Iqani, 2017:110). Another significant segment of current students have grown up in peripheral areas and financially impoverished conditions not dissimilar from the apartheid era in which their parents were raised. Despite the complexity of the student body, university students find themselves implicated in a hegemonic liberal discourse and construction of collective memory that celebrates non-racialism. However, critical discourses and racial solidarities continue to resonate deeply, with many students finding themselves at a precipice between competing political projects and discourses. This cohort, and especially those reared in the aspirational spaces of universities, on the surface appear well-positioned to be harbingers of non-racialism and cosmopolitanism. The Fallist movements seek to repudiate this notion, as encapsulated in the Fallist slogan, “Our parents were sold a dream in 1994; we’re here for a refund” (Stolley, 2015).

Reflecting upon their generation’s common circumstances, students are informed by mediated constructions of collective memory (Eyerman and Turner, 1998; Mannheim, 1952). A hallmark of student activism is the promotion of new generational values, consciousness or dispositions (Burawoy, 1976; Eyerman & Turner, 1998; Gill & DeFronzo, 2008; Gold, Christie & Friedman, 1976; Ibrahim, 2010). In line with this imperative, Fallists “reflexively produce a generational memory” of their own in resistance to dominant mediated constructions of collective memory (Bosch, 2017:228; Eyerman & Turner, 1998:94). Through critique and praxis, Fallists convey a “departure from the non-racial conciliatory Rainbow Nation project” (Molefe, 2016:32).

1.3 Student Movements

Universities serve as one of the key central institutions in which “discourses of the dominant and the dominated encounter each other” (Reddy, 2015:30). University campuses are “frontier spaces” in that they can both “reopen prior histories of encounter” and reveal how “contemporary relationships of power are structured” (Ahmed, 2000:12). Fallism emerged within historically white institutions where Black students exposed the ongoing legacies of domination in contemporary South African society. I provide a conceptual grounding of student movements below, and situate the standpoint of Fallists.

Students encounter the “extent of emancipation” and the “contradictions of modernity” within postcolonial societies (Burawoy, 1976:85; Reddy, 2015:8). These students find themselves at the forefront of the national project, embodying its future prospects as “natural agents of modernisation” (Klineberg, 1979:6). Demographic factors, such as young populations, high levels of inequality, and scarcity of university graduates mean that students must shoulder a considerable burden of transforming their societies. While at university, students confront the dissonance between reality and their ideals and probe alternative political and economic frameworks (Gill & DeFronzo, 2009). Student life facilitates a set of conditions under which contentious politics can circulate: universities are home to people of similar ages who are encouraged to think critically, foster close and continuous social interaction, and prohibit stratification on the basis of socioeconomic status (Burawoy, 1976; Luescher, Loader, & Mugume, 2016). The formation of student activist movements reflects collective dissonance and the crystallisation of purpose. Student movements are particular kinds of social movements, which Diani defines as “networks of individuals and groups, based on shared collective identities, engaged in political or social conflicts” (cited by Gill & DeFronzo, 2009:208). Student activist movements are composed of a “critical mass” of individuals that emerge out of dense networks and that nurture particular kinds of group solidarity and visions for social change (Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012:597). Fallist movements are defined by a predilection for “non-institutionalised” or “non-normative” collective actions that disturb the existing social order, such as occupations of buildings and acts of sabotage (Cele, 2015:54; Gill & DeFronzo, 2008:208). Fallists reject and circumvent existing channels of decision-making that are based on representative forms of democracy (Naidoo, 2016b). Fallism is conceived by those who identify with it as a collection of student movements that pursue decoloniality by averting institutionalised leadership structures (Kim, 2016; Laterza & Manqoyi, 2016).

1.4 Everyday resistance

This section introduces the concept of “everyday resistance” as a framework for understanding Fallism, and more specifically, the way that Fallists engage on Twitter as an “emerging counterpublic network”

(Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:397). Framing Fallism as everyday resistance enables a more sophisticated understanding of the Fallist movements than would be possible by only focusing on coordinated and institutional protest campaigns. The concept of everyday resistance positions Fallism in the same terms that students use to define their movements: a heuristic “revolution-as-becoming” that extends beyond coordinated mobilisation (Molefe, 2015:35).

Haynes and Prakash provide a useful point of entry into the concept of everyday resistance. They focus on resistance from the perspective of “subordinate groups,” whose “cultural practices and identities [...] remain firmly grounded in a terrain mapped by the dominant” (Haynes & Prakash, 1991:1). These scholars define resistance as “those behaviours and cultural practices by subordinate groups that contest hegemonic social formations, that threaten to unravel the strategies of domination” (Haynes & Prakash, 1991:3). Haynes & Prakash thus enable a broadened conception of resistance beyond “extraordinary moments of collective protest” (1991:1). In a similar vein, Scott distinguishes the concept from formal politics, arguing that “everyday resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains” (1985:33). Social networking sites like Twitter provide Fallists a platform to engage in everyday resistance within this immediate, informal and counter-hegemonic setting.

Black Feminism inflects Fallists’ approach to everyday resistance. Emerging out of resistance to oppression at the intersection of race, class and gender, Black Feminist scholars regard “the everyday” as an important site for both critique and praxis (Gqola, 2001b; Knight Steele, 2016). Black Feminism approaches resistance from the standpoint of black women, moving these women’s voices from the margins to the centre (Collins, 1998; hooks, 2000). Collins’s concept of the “matrix of domination” frames everyday resistance as responsive to three levels of social organisation and oppression: the micro-level of personal experience, the meso- or communal-level of social groups, and the macro-level of institutions (Collins, 1998; Knight Steele, 2016; Carastathis, 2016). Resistance to the matrix of domination informs Black Feminists’ “situated standpoint that emerges from, rather than suppresses, the complexity of [...] [black] women’s experiences” (Collins, 1998:228).

1.5 Origins of The Fallist movements: #RhodesMustFall

In South Africa, universities have historically diverged along the lines of ideological, admission and language policies. South Africa’s oldest university established during the colonial era, the University of Cape Town secured a reputation as a historically English “bastion of liberal intellectual thought” (Chetty, 2009; Mabokela, 2000). By the twilight of apartheid in the mid-1980s, the university aggressively revised its admissions policy as a locus of transformation. The university resolved to increase the previously negligible number of black students, while a secondary and more gradual intention was to alter the

institution's "structures of governance" (Moulder, 1985; Nuttall, 1999). Throughout the intervening years leading up to the rise of Rhodes Must Fall in 2015, UCT's institutional culture has been characterised by simultaneous "overwhelming whiteness" in faculty and senior leadership positions and rapidly changing student demographics (Higgins, 2013).

An ardent colonial white supremacist, John Cecil Rhodes was a benefactor to the University of Cape Town in the 19th century. During his lifetime, Rhodes made clear that he regarded the university as serving a project based on settler domination and exploitation (Johnson, 1967). However, in 2015, more than a century after his death, a statue of Rhodes continued to sit "in pride of place" at the base of UCT's main campus (Naidoo, 2016:181). Many students believed that the statue, quite simply, had "nothing to do on a public campus 20 years after freedom" (Mbembe, 2015:3). The statue's ongoing presence sent a daily reminder to students and staff that entering the university required them "to move through different temporalities [...] of South Africa's ongoing history of transition" (Hook, 2012:7).

On 9 March 2015, student Chumani Maxwele hurled human excrement onto the Rhodes statue. He had obtained the excrement from portaloos used by poor residents in informal areas of townships in Cape Town. Simultaneously, Maxwele displayed placards that read, "Exhibit White Arrogance @ UCT" and "Exhibit Black Assimilation at UCT." Much like the 2013 "poo protests" by residents of Cape Town's informal settlements, Maxwele demonstrated the enduring potency of the "instant media spectacle" in South African protest and performance (Robins, 2014:92). The dispersal of human excrement conveys a subaltern cultural politics rooted in disturbing the purity of public spaces as modern, rational, and clean (Doron and Raja, 2015). Given the absence of basic sanitary infrastructure in poor swaths of the city, the public presence of excrement undercuts any neat delineation of public and private realms. Whereas the earlier poo protests were tied to concrete demands for municipal "service delivery," Maxwele sought to subvert a broader set of alienating and oppressive cultural practices symbolised by the statue. In a UCT Radio interview the day after defacing the statue, Maxwele framed his protest within a tradition of Black resistance to everyday exclusionary practices at UCT, ranging from past racial segregation of staff and students' residences through to the recent decentring of race in admissions policy. He stated "those of us who know this history clearly are feeling very traumatised with his [Rhodes'] existence at the centre of UCT's space. All of us, we pass by there every single day" (UCT Radio, 2015).

The protest instigated a number of dialogues on campus and in cyberspace, where the motto and hashtag, #RhodesMustFall, began to circulate. These mediated early dialogues, organised around the hashtag, emanated far beyond the members of the university proper: A range of journalists, public intellectuals, and newsmakers made influential contributions and weighed into these discussions (Bosch, 2017). On 20

March, a week and a half after Maxwele's protest, a group of students, carrying Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) banners, marched to the administrative Bremner building on Middle Campus. The students occupied its Archie Mafeje Room, where the university's administration meets. Renaming the space "Azania House," the movement committed to two immediate-term goals in a statement on Facebook: "1) disrupt the normal processes of management and 2) force management to accept our demands" (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015a:9).

Azania House served as a headquarters for the movement, providing space for black students to articulate their experiences and raise political consciousness. The movement looked far beyond the statue alone: Students highlighted the "myriad mechanisms that exclude black South Africans still from opening the doors of learning" (Coetzee, 2016:207). In addition to the persistent financial, linguistic, and cultural barriers to access for black students, RMF contested inadequate progress in making university staff and curricula more representative of the population's experiences (Naidoo, 2016a). Black pain proved a focal point for the collective: According to one RMF organiser, "In our first meeting we started with speaking about how we were going to address the pain in the room before we started addressing our pain to the world" (Pather, 2015). The term "black pain" circulated as shorthand for black students' long-suppressed "entanglement of memory, experience, and identity" (Laterza & Manqoyi, 2016). RMF activists formed subcommittees to focus on engaging campus leadership, media houses, and fellow students. The RMF writing subcommittee wrote prolifically during this period, posting frequent statements on current events on Facebook. A collection of these curated writings, later published by Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism on their website, form the primary basis for the Fallist ideology explicated here.

RMF activists used their platform at Azania to delineate a program towards radically "decolonising" the university. They mandated an oppositional stance towards the university administration, which they suggested was complicit in normalising a liberal agenda. In a statement, RMF described the movement as driven by "the need for a new language that challenges the pacifying logic of liberalism. This logic presents itself to us in these ideas of reform and transformation" (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015c:12). In place of liberalism, RMF elucidated an ideology based on the three conceptual pillars of Pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness and Black Feminism (Kim, 2016; Naidoo, 2016a). On 9 April, the statue was removed from campus. This followed ongoing pressure from RMF on UCT management. An important step in this process was when RMF activists disrupted a meeting of UCT Council members who were deciding on the fate of the statue; RMF activists refused to leave until a conclusion favourable to the movement was reached. In a statement read by the movement the day of the removal, they regarded this outcome as proof of "the effectiveness of our radical tactics of engagement only on our own terms without compromise" (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015c:12).

The successful removal of the statue marked only the first milestone of Fallist resistance. As Kim points out, RMF “lit the proverbial fire in pushing a decolonial agenda” (2016). RMF spurred and inspired Fallist student activism at universities across the nation: Open Stellenbosch, the Black Student Movement at the University (currently known as) Rhodes, the Black Student Stokvel at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, and the October6 Fees Must Fall campaign at the University of the Witwatersrand, all engaged explicitly in decolonial programmes on their respective campuses (Naidoo, 2016a:182-183). The largest of these subsequent Fallist programmes took place at Wits, where students inspired by RMF occupied the university’s Senate House, renamed it Solomon Mahlangu House (Naidoo, 2016b). Fallist energies culminated in the national #FeesMustFall campaign of October 2015, where students shut down most of the universities across the nation in protest against proposed fee hikes and the increasing reliance on outsourced labour on campuses. Students took to the streets, marching to the Union Building in Pretoria, and Parliament in Cape Town, on the dates of 21-23 October 2015, bringing their demands to the state’s doorstep.

These Fallist movements have been described as a new brand of student politics in South Africa that rejects alignment with political parties and distrusts hierarchical leadership structures. Students call into question conventional modes of representative democracy and leadership (Laterza & Manqoyi, 2016; Gibson, 2017; Naidoo, 2016b). The underlying sentiment emanating from the movements are that “we are all leaders” (Molefe, 2015:31). The rejection of leadership structures is evident in direct dealings with university management: Fallists demand that these be conducted publicly (Molefe, 2015:31), and when negotiations are not an option, students are willing to disrupt management meetings held behind closed doors (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015:12). Representatives for Fallist movements in the media are decided on directly by students on a per-instance basis (Gibson, 2017:593). The aversion to formal leadership is also evident through protests on campus and in the streets: Laterza & Manqoyi (2016) describe Fallist students protest as taking place within a “leaderless crowd” structure. In addition, social networking sites are used to broadcast protests and meetings to fellow cadres, and these engagements are often recorded and uploaded via Facebook.

1.6 The Fallist “revolution-as-becoming”

Fallist movements were initially catalysed by attempts to collectively confront the historic and ongoing “institutional culture of whiteness” in universities. An oft-deployed idiom, “institutional culture” encompasses the lingering and “powerful currents of racial feeling still active in South African society” (Higgins, 2013:102). Fallist discourse contests prevalent framings of race in contemporary South African society. Fallists reject the idea of the “rainbow nation” by publicising their own alienation from its underlying social logic. For Fallists, the “rainbowist” framework generates toxic effects and affects,

concealing the legacies of white supremacy and resulting anger that constitutes the masses of contemporary South African society. “Rainbowism” is often articulated to a post-racial ethos in practice. As Njovane suggests, “the unwillingness to engage with the issue of race [...] constitutes a form of denialism rendered pathological by the very fact that it dismisses critical analysis of the lived experience of black people” (2015:119). Fallists understand “rainbowism” as “an authorising narrative which assisted in the denial of difference” (Gqola, 2001a:98).

In opposition to “rainbowism,” Fallists articulate a populist discourse, which “aims at building a new subject of collective action [...] capable of reconfiguring a social order lived as unfair” (Mouffe, 2016). Fallists aim to disturb and reimagine contemporary South African society. Fallists fundamentally rebuke the liberal theoretical model of citizenship, participation, and representation. Fallists expunge the “liberal mandate to keep passion out of politics” on account of alleged incompatibility with rationality, consensus, or liberty (Hall, 2005:3). Fallists disturb the notion of the “disembodied and affectively purified subject of conventional liberal democracy” (Butler & Athanasiou, 2010:176). Fallist discourse straddles the personal and political, the public and the private. Fallists relish their status in the public imagination as “rogue elements in a stable social equilibrium” (Willis, 2015:47). The university, and especially the historically white university, represents for Fallists a pacifying gateway to social mobility and integration in the mould of white middle class aspirations, and an obstruction to mass solidarity. Fallists invoke Black Consciousness and Black Feminist ideologies in everyday resistance to white supremacy and liberalism; these ideological traditions in South Africa have shared a focus on opposing dominant forces and cultivating distinct practices, stances, and subjectivities (Biko, 1978; Gqola, 2001b; Hirson, 1979; MacDonald, 2012).

Fallist movements make up a “revolution-as-becoming,” that is dedicated to “disinvesting from unearned privileges and oppressive ideologies [...] and becoming new people” (Molefe, 2015:32). Informed by critical understandings of privilege and power, the movements strive for decoloniality and intersectionality as “heuristic” tools (Carbado et al, 2013: 11; Collins, 1998). These imperatives are pursued heuristically by Fallists in two important ways: For one, they are “adaptive strategies” that guide approaches towards problems and solutions: namely, resistance to domination and oppression (Goldstein and Gigerenzer, 2002:75). In addition, decoloniality and intersectionality are heuristic in that they promote self-discovery and experiential learning-on-the-fly (“heuristic”, 2016). Decoloniality compels “de-linking” knowledge and being from colonial logics (Mignolo, 2007:450). As institutions of higher learning, universities constitute launching points for this decolonial agenda. The intersectional imperative sanctions students “on the margins within intersecting systems” of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability to form the vanguard of the movements (Collins, 1998:8). Intersectionality as an imperative is

frequently expressed within the movements, and was encapsulated in October 2015, when RMF printed slogans on the backs of t-shirts: “The revolution will be black-led and intersectional, or it will be bullshit” and “this revolution is led by Black queer women” (Collins, 1998; Kim, 2016). Social networking sites (SNSs) like Twitter bolster Fallists to enact everyday resistance online guided by these heuristic frameworks; Fallists claim dialogic spaces of their own and “move their voices from the margins to the centre” of public discourse (Gunn, 2015:21). SNSs facilitate solidarity and affiliation among Fallists through the circulation of shared sentiments and evaluations (Berlant, 2008; Papacharissi, 2014; Zappavigna, 2011). At the same time, SNSs offer a platform for ardent negative identification against an opposing movement, in this case “communal disassociation” from politicised whiteness and liberalism (Smith-Prei & Stehle, 2016:119).

2 Literature and conceptual review

This section of the dissertation explores a range of concepts and debates put forward by scholars in the fields of communication, cultural studies, and digital media studies. I approach these debates from an abiding critical feminist perspective, and am attentive to dynamics of domination, exclusion, and resistance. The literature and conceptual review is combined below in the form of three main sections: the first two of these elaborate the conceptual framework of the public sphere, elucidating Habermas's normative perspective and proceeding with critical feminist critiques. Specifically, the notions of deliberation, communicative reason, and rational-critical debate are highlighted and challenged. This is followed by a review of the literature that discusses particular kinds of "actualized publics" within the broader public sphere (Ahva, 2011:123). I discuss counterpublics (Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002); publics as audiences (Livingstone, 2005); networked publics (boyd, 2011); intimate publics (Berlant, 2008); and affective publics (Papacharissi, 2014). I propose that these concepts are useful in understanding Fallists' networked brand of communication and resistance on Twitter. The third part of this section focuses on Twitter and its affordances for communication, resistance, and protest. I situate Twitter within the framework of social networking sites (SNSs), and also identify "microblogging" as the platform's defining feature. The combination of networked communication and microblogging lend Twitter its distinct social and technological affordances (Brock, 2012; Hutchby, 2001). These sections are reviewed here as lenses through which Fallist networks can be understood at the current stage of their development. This conceptual grounding aids the social networking analysis and the interpretive content analysis.

2.1 Habermas's public sphere

The ideas of Jürgen Habermas, particularly those formed in his early seminal work, *The structural transformation of the public sphere* (1991), provide a point of entry into theorising the public sphere contribution on publics, and forms the focus of this section. In the tradition of early German critical theory, the concept of the public sphere appealed to Habermas as both an instrument of societal critique and an institutional standard of democratic, emancipatory principles (Fleming, 1995; Holub, 1991). A "champion of the modernist project," Habermas sought to vindicate reason and rationality as valid principles that should be upheld in public (Edgar, 2006). He argues that engaged citizens should respect these principles in order to resolve seemingly intractable disputes and arrive at consensus. In Habermas's formulation, the public sphere designates the institutionalised communicative context where, through rational deliberation and critique, autonomous citizens engage with matters of the public interest. The public sphere can blossom in physical or mediated spaces, and is conceptualised here as a unified one, to

the degree that citizens of various political beliefs can share an open forum on equal terms (Squires, 2002).

Habermas develops the concept of the public sphere through distinguishing between instrumental and communicative reason. Instrumental reason referred to the logic of rational choice in which ends determined means. Habermas objects to a dependence on instrumental reason in the public sphere. He deems instrumental reason “pre-political,” since deliberative publics could, at best, be made of an aggregation of narrow self-interest rather than a reasoned appraisal of the public good (1994:3). He advocates for communicative reason as *inherently* valuable, since it is predicated on equal access and the public good, and as against coercion. Truth claims should be assessed intersubjectively, and “rational-critical debate” anchors contributions in the public sphere (Edgar, 2006; Manzi, 2012). Habermas’ idealised public sphere therefore emerges out of a specific kind of politics that must be clarified further if we are to understand its fault lines with the Fallist context. Habermas’ vision valorises “reciprocal recognition” among deliberating citizens, who transcend personal or private interests to act in solidarity based on a common good (Habermas, 1994:1): Not only negative rights, like freedom of speech and the franchise, compel democratic citizens. For Habermas, citizens aspire towards a shared “praxis of participation” that is exercised communicatively in order to reach shared understandings (1994:2). Habermas also disapproved of the “communitarian” impulse of republicanism. He proposes that deliberation not be constricted by ethical prerogatives like integration or preservation of a preordained community. He advocates for a *deliberative* politics that is decentred from community and focused on institutionalising fair procedures and regulations of communication in the public sphere (1994:7).

Central to Habermas’s work is the contention that, in order for the public sphere to operate and hold sway in society, it must be composed of citizens with full and equal rights to privacy, who are then committed to protecting them against encroachment from the public sphere. Habermas initially conflates a variety of concepts under the umbrella of privacy and the private sphere. These concepts include moral and religious beliefs as matters of personal conscience and discretion; economic liberty and commodity exchange as free from state interference; and the intimate sphere of the household, away from the purview of the public and its norms of engagement (Benhabib, 1992:91). Conceptions of public and private realms in the western liberal tradition derive from the ancient Greeks, who clarified the division between open interactions between free male citizens of the city, the *polis*, and intimate engagements within the household, the *oikos*. Both domains were distinct yet mutually reinforcing, to the extent that the status of men in one domain secured their legitimacy in the other (Susen, 2011:39). Habermas illustrates the curtailment of the public sphere in feudal Europe, where “manorial order” was an outgrowth of endowed, absolute sovereign authority (1991:7). The nobility ensconced the public realm as a “status attribute”

rather than as a free social realm. The private sphere was not apart from the public either, since domination, surveillance, and immunity within the “landed estate” (Habermas, 1991:141) also permeated domestic life. The modern liberal idea of civil society as outside the economy and authority of the state was stifled.

Habermas valorises Europe’s Enlightenment period in the 17th and 18th centuries. Constitutional governance, affording new avenues of civic participation, supplanted religious and monarchical control. Concurrently, early capitalism intensified the exchange of commodities and information. Previously non-existent avenues for both private autonomy and public engagement in the modern sense began to surface. Moving away from royal courts and into towns, a “new stratum of bourgeois people” emerged, that consisted not of aristocrats or nobility, but literate, educated public administrators as well as civil society professionals like doctors, pastors, and professors (Habermas, 1991:23). This bourgeois segment read prolifically, triggering the establishment of a periodical press, and nourishing critical discussions of aesthetics and politics, while devising norms for public communication. This cohort came to form what Habermas calls a “bourgeois public sphere,” a discursive space for reasoned debate, discussion, and criticism of public authority. “Rational-critical debate” flourished in the salons, museums, theatres and cafes of Western Europe.

2.1.1 Public and private

The bourgeois public sphere occupied a space between public state authority, private commodity exchange, religious institutions, and the intimate domain of the household. As Calhoun points out, the public sphere’s modern delineation was crucial to Habermas “by virtue of its simultaneous autonomy and openness — open in principle and free from determination of arguments by social status” (2012:123). Progenitors of this bourgeois sphere conceived the public domain as an accessible site, suited for opinion formation and the exercise of political agency. The private domain was exclusive and shaped by “special ties” among associated individuals. Citizens in the public domain concerned themselves with the common good, while more atomised individual interests informed the private domain (Benhabib & Cornell, 1987:6). The *bourgeoisie*, as enablers of public subjectivity, clamoured for the sanctity of the autonomous private and intimate spheres. Only given an “ontological distinction” between private, intimate and public realms could the public sphere truly emerge (Susen, 2011). This separation was vital, and Habermas argues that publicity was an outgrowth of “a specific subjectivity” cultivated in the patriarchal conjugal family (1991:43). The private privileges of the bourgeoisie, which were rooted in class, race, and gender, secured the public identity of a citizen. As a result, the public sphere transcended a spatial concept or abstract metaphor. “Public” and “private” labelled the “social contexts, kinds of feeling, and genres of language” that were deemed appropriate in their respective realms (Warner, 2002:27). The private

designated personal confidentiality, rather than social engagement, and interpersonal, rather than mass, communication. Privacy in this formulation corresponds to logics of concealment and opacity, as opposed to the visibility and decorum that were indicative of the public sphere (Susen, 2011:40).

2.1.2 Public opinion, critical reason, and rational debate

Members of the bourgeois public sphere sought to amass “public opinion.” For Habermas, public opinion is the final stage in a process that begins with informed private reflection on public affairs that is “purified,” or validated externally, through rational argumentation in the public sphere (1991:94-95). Citizens arrive at public opinion communicatively, based on the appeal of a given position to universal validity. Habermas attached his theory of communicative action to the concepts of public reason and rational-critical debate. For Habermas, rational argumentation binds speakers to a set of implied mutual obligations and rights in the public sphere, or “discourse principles” (cited by Fleming, 1997). These principles include universal access, equal participation in the form of questions or assertions, and freedom from repressing attitudes, desires, or needs. He calibrates his discourse principles to suit the intended goal of reaching conditions of validity through consensus, imploring interlocutors to consider the interests and repercussions of speech upon everyone (Fleming, 1997:73-74).

Public communication comes to designate the deployment of communicative reason and rational argumentation. As a “sociological precondition” for the public sphere, the individuals’ private, particular associations are to have limited bearing on their judgements (Habermas, 1991:109). Habermas quotes a French legislator who asserts that “before public opinion, all authorities become silent, all prejudices disappear, [and] all particular interests are effaced” (Habermas, 1991:99). Bourgeois publics seek to rationalise politics “in the name of morality” through a process of using communicative reason in debate (Habermas, 1991:102). Advocates of this normative publicness aspire to impartiality, standing outside an issue of public concern as though not personally invested in its outcome, and viewing citizens as undifferentiated (Young, 1987). The brand of publicity advocated by Habermas discouraged attachments to communities or identities that are not universal (Fraser, 1990). A habituated ethos of argumentation and “of refusing the comfort of a collective identity” is thus nurtured in the bourgeois public sphere (Goodman, 2010:54). Since the prerogative of the bourgeois public sphere is the cultivation of public opinion and critical reason, affective and emotive forms of engagement are positioned as affronts to normative publicity and critical reason. The protection of rationality “expels particularity and desire and sets feeling in opposition” (Young, 1987:65). This logic of passion as a contaminating agent sanctions “abstract, disembodied forms of disinterested communication in modernity” (Goodman, 2010:54).

2.2 Beyond Habermas's public sphere

Briefly put, we as black people will not have our pain silenced or attacked, nor will we concede to demands that it be rationalized — all of which inevitably occur in any process of "rational discussion" which includes the very university stakeholders at whose hands we are oppressed. The strict demarcation of legitimate discourse at UCT to only such rational discussion is violent and silencing to black voices — which is precisely why they have been silent until now. We will not compromise our pain (Rhodes Must Fall, 2015c:15)

The Fallist microblogger who this study focuses on subverts the ontological presumption that public and private are dichotomous realms, reconfigures the rational–critical logic of the public sphere, and asserts an embodied subjectivity within it. In practice, this Fallist microblogger disturbs the normative procession of the public sphere through everyday resistance. As I will argue, resistance is a key element that binds Fallists into a distinctive public of their own that is networked, oppositional, affective, and intimate. In order to truly conceptualise how student Fallists create their own emerging “networked counterpublic,” it is essential to elucidate criticisms of Habermas’ model (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:399).

2.2.1 Critical feminist engagements

Critical feminist scholarship presents a rebuke to a number of assumptions propounded by Habermas in his theorisation of the public sphere and communicative action. These scholars expose how the absence of gender analysis in Habermas’s *Structural transformations* not only detracts from many of his proposals, but renders them untenable. Critical feminist scholars largely agree on the pejorative impact of the public–private dichotomy as “a principle of social organisation” and communication (Benhabib & Cornell, 1987; Fraser, 1990; Young, 1997). Benhabib recognises that “questions of justice were from the beginning restricted to the public sphere, whereas the private [intimate] sphere was considered outside the realm of justice” (1992:92). While Habermas correctly identifies that private autonomy from state control authorises engagements in the public sphere, he obfuscates the matter of gender equality in the intimate sphere, failing to grapple with the ongoing “historical confinement of women” within that domain (Fleming, 1995:118). The naturalised linkage of women with domesticity serves as an explanatory mechanism in Habermas’ theory — the division of labour at the core of the public-intimate divide makes possible and coherent the required intersubjectivity of the public sphere. Women’s labour is simultaneously instrumentalised and smudged out of the public purview. The private sphere, where women’s labour is relegated, denotes particularity, tradition, context, and affectivity (Goodman, 2010:56). As Brystrom and Nuttall put it, “not only is the private the other of the public, but also it is the abject other: devalued because of its association with women’s voices and the unpredictable realm of feeling or emotion” (2013:318).

Habermas (1992) has acknowledged that gendered exclusion is not incidental but constitutive of the historic division between public and private spheres. However, as Fleming (1997) points out, Habermas tempers this insight by suggesting that the modern public sphere is capable of transforming itself such that “particularistic” movements for gender inclusion will erode when decoupled from property rights and the monopolisation of power by men. This assessment belies the reality that “there persisted a specific form of humanity — a male one — that falsely posed as a common humanity” (Fleming, 1997:127-128). Gender transcends Habermas’ depiction as a “particularistic” concept. Since the intimate sphere has long been configured by the norms of the patriarchal conjugal family, conceptions of the public and private sphere are “bound up with masculinity and femininity” more fundamentally (Warner, 2002:24). Gender is a central element in the modern era’s hegemonic mode of domination that authorises the bourgeois public sphere to seek out “consensus” sustained more by acquiescence than by the pure repression of the preceding feudal era (Fraser, 1990). In addition, the deliberative version of the public sphere recommended by Habermas is couched exclusively in the language of the “common good.” Critical feminists call into question this single-minded focus, proposing a broadening of the boundaries of meaningful public engagements to include what Habermas would call “ethical” considerations (Fraser, 1990).

The formulation of normative reason and rational argumentation is at odds with a critical communicative ethic. Critical feminist scholars contest the notion that marginalised groups can, or should try, to deliberate in the public sphere on equal terms given status inequalities (Dawson, 1995; Fraser, 1990; Young, 1987). The “bracketing” of inequality sanctioned by communicative reason is both exclusionary and detrimental for feminist praxis (Fraser, 1990). Landes (1995) cautions that “the goals of generalisability and appeals to the common good may conceal rather than expose forms of domination, [and] suppress rather than release concrete differences among persons or groups” (Landes, 1995:99). In pursuit of normative publicity and the cultivation of public opinion, “gender vanishes with the subject”, rendering women’s labour and experience incommensurable in the public sphere (Goodman, 2010:56). This same erasure of difference within the public sphere has extended to queer, disabled, and racialized embodied subjectivities. Contra Habermas, critical feminists “begin ethical theorising with embodied, gendered subjects who have particular histories, particular communities, allegiances, and visions of human flourishing” (Morgan, cited by Held, 1993:52). These approaches seek to “concretize” differences among interlocutors within the public sphere, and transcend gendered conceptions of autonomy that are “disembedded and disembodied” (Benhabib, 1987). Critical feminists rebuke the rational-critical model of the public sphere by advocating for the very features Habermas consigns to the private intimate realm to be recognised and reimagined publicly. Rather than try to attain universal validity or consensus, critical

feminists celebrate “the expressive and bodily aspects of communication” (Young, 1987:70), thus opening up the possibilities for conceiving of publics beyond conventional modern renderings.

2.2.2 Counterpublics and intimate publics

Habermas’s idealised public sphere stems from a deliberative model of politics that is beholden to safeguarding the “common good” by mandating normative procedures of communicative reason. Deliberative politics demands that the public sphere remain unified in the minds of its interlocutors: Without concern or reference to a single public, there could be no claim to valid consensus or public opinion and therefore no basis for the cultivation of communicative reason. In pursuit of communicative reason, the deliberative model also sanctions “disinterested” forms of communication free of affect and emotion (Goodman, 2010). Subsequent critical theorists have addressed the exclusionary foundations of the deliberative political model within stratified societies (Fraser, 1990; Dawson, 1995; Warner, 2002; Young, 1997). Given vast differences in both “symbolic and material privilege” (Young, 1987:126), an insistence on objective appeals to the common good obstructs meaningful inclusion of marginalised groups within the public sphere. The Habermasian model discounts “anything that smacks of the affective, the emotional or the passionate” as tainting communicative reason and public concord (Dahlgren, 2009:83). Critical scholars instead identify the emancipatory and civic potential of passionate communication. A more fruitful conception of the public sphere is one not merely of singularity, but rather of multiplicity (Fraser, 1990:67). From this perspective, the public sphere never reaches a state of comprehensive unification, but instead encompasses a number of constituent “actualized publics” (Ahva, 2011:123). Individuals may participate in a variety of publics.

The theorisation of “counterpublics” clarifies one such public variety that is useful in conceptualising the subversive online engagements of student Fallists. Counterpublics provide a broadened conceptual framework that allows communication scholars to look beyond rational–critical deliberation as a rubric for public sphere engagements. As Asen clarifies, counterpublics “signal that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated *alternatives* to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants” (2000:425, emphasis added). Negt & Kluge were the first to coin the term “counterpublics,” deploying a class analysis to note the presence of oppositional discourses within proletarian public spheres (Brouwer & Licona, 2006). Nancy Fraser’s influential contribution (1990) makes explicit reference to individuals belonging to subaltern social movements. She noted that queer, race, gender, and class-based movements, historically excluded and/or maligned in wider considerations of the public interest, often generated discourses that were confrontational to the status quo. These publics aimed not to abide by Habermas’s procedures of communicative reason, but to fulfill a “contestatory function in stratified societies” (Fraser, 1990:67). For

Fraser, counterpublics expose a dialectic through which members both staked out alternative discursive domains, and agitated for recognition from wider publics (1990:68).

With the history of African American struggles as a point of entry, Squires (2002) advances a more comprehensive theory of demarcated publics. She adopts Scott's delineation of public versus hidden "transcripts" deployed by oppressed people, whose invocation indicated publics' broader aspirations. Squires's notion of the counterpublic distinguishes itself from "enclave" publics that existed during the era of Jim Crow segregation. Marginalised by oppressive relations vis-à-vis the dominant public, enclave publics were driven by concealment out of necessity. Members focused on "the maintenance of safe spaces, hidden communication networks, and group memory to guard against unwanted publicity" (Squires, 2002:458). Outside the safety of the intimate sphere, enclave publics exclusively deployed public transcripts. For Squires (2002), counterpublics instead arise amidst diminished levels of subjugation and increased resource mobilisation by movements that clamour for recognition outside of the enclave. Counterpublics are more selective in their use of enclave spaces, and are defined by their refusal to adhere to public transcripts, and their commitment to "*project* the hidden transcripts, previously spoken only in enclaves" (Squires, 2002:460, emphasis added). Squires speaks here to the dialectical impetus of counterpublics addressed by Fraser: counterpublics are propelled by a desire to both preserve their defining characteristics while also "influencing and reconfiguring the wider entity upon which they are dependent as citizens" (Coleman & Ross, 2010:73).

Fraser's and Squires's ideas were framed by a preoccupation with counterpublics as participatory sites outside of the dominant public. Warner (2002) makes a useful contribution in noting the departures from Habermasian communication within counterpublics. Warner further develops Fraser's paradigm of publics as discursively constituted. Focusing on queer counterpublics, he emphasises the extent to which these discourses interpellate particular kinds of people who oppose and circumvent normative public speech (Warner, 2002). He contends that counterpublics execute an additional *performative* function, beyond contestation and circulation of alternative discourses. Counterpublics propose a form of "stranger-sociability and its reflexivity [...] that is not just strategic, but also constitutive of membership and its affects" (Warner, 2002:122). While communicative reason replicated dominant discursive principles, counterpublic discourses seek to transform them. Central here is the open performance of an "embodied subjectivity" that eclipses reading in private as the foundation of public agency (Warner, 2002:123). Warner asserts that counterpublics "are testing our understanding of how private life can be made publicly relevant. And they are elaborating not only new shared worlds and critical languages but also new privacies, new individuals, new bodies, new intimacies and new citizenships [...] corporeal style in general no longer needs to be understood as private" (2002:62-63).

Berlant (2008) has offered a parallel perspective to counterpublics through her theorisation of intimate publics. Berlant recognises the prominence of what she calls “sentimentality” in the public sphere. Through the generation of “affect worlds,” intimate publics offer their members a sense of belonging, and above all else “feel like ethical places based on the sense of capacious emotional continuity they circulate” (Berlant, 2008:6). Members nurture this sense of continuity, emanating from reflection of common historical experiences of oppression. Mediated texts that express members’ “fantasies of transcending, dissolving, or refunctioning the obstacles that shape their historical conditions” constitute intimate publics (Berlant, 2008:8). Intimate public spheres foster “wiles for surviving, thriving, and transcending the world as it presents itself” (Berlant, 2008:2). Berlant notes the importance of everyday “banal” experiences to intimate publics, as sites where members articulate their affective and emotional attachments (2008:10). Berlant expresses concern at the integral role of sentimentality within intimate publics. She suggests that scenes of identification and belonging as bases for public engagement involve a degree of circularity. Berlant cautions against a scenario where “people’s interests are less in changing the world than not being defeated by it, and meanwhile finding satisfaction in minor pleasures and major fantasies” (Berlant, 2008:27).

Theorists of counterpublics have emphasised their formally political functions in an institutional context and in instrumental terms. Berlant (2008) conceives of intimate publics as providing more of “a relief from the political,” where historically marginalised interlocutors generate an aesthetic and spiritual “scene” (2008:10). These interlocutors can pursue, but frequently elude, mobilisation into counterpublics out of apprehension for retraumatisation and intimidation (Berlant, 2008:10-11). Berlant here considers the intimate public as a rudiment for the properly political action entailed by counterpublics. She raises a central tension within student Fallist publics, between a realm that is, the on one hand, what Berlant calls “juxtapolitical,” an enclave scene of identification, and, on the other, a rallying signifier through which direct confrontation with dominant publics occurs (2008:10). The question of the emancipatory potential of alternative publics emerges when its members express a predilection for the former. I seek to highlight tweets by a student Fallist online, in everyday acts of resistance, as evidence of innovative cultural production in its own right (Dobson, 2016:5).

2.2.3 Mediatised and networked publics

This section elaborates on the literature regarding mediatised publics, with particular focus on online social networking sites and their affordances. The theorisation of counterpublics and intimate publics provides a framework to overcome the strictures of the Habermasian model and take seriously counterpublic formations. Below, I canvass contemporary media scholarship from a critical feminist perspective in order to reflect on the dynamics of the mediatised public sphere.

Contemporary scholars of publics indicate the increasing extent to which mass media refracts and situates public texts, as well as the performance of activities and identities. Here I refer to the phenomenon termed “mediatisation.” As Hjarvard puts it, “mediatisation” captures the “process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” (cited by Stromback & Esser, 2014:4). Identities, materials, and channels for exercising public agency are now highly mediated, to a degree inconceivable to bourgeois publics of the Enlightenment era. Student Fallists make this clear both in terms of protest tactics and communications online. In *Structural transformations*, Habermas decries modern mediatisation as a detriment to authentically informed citizenship in favour of a brand inflected by cultural consumerism. Entertainment, personal tastes, and promotion of sectional interests eclipse the deliberative responsibilities endorsed by the bourgeois public sphere. Following Habermas, a number of scholars have seized a similar thesis, arguing that media use is more defensive than proactive, and inferior to face-to-face engagements. Media scholars counter that online media platforms also cultivate social capital in the form of information and trust (Antoci, Sabatini, & Sodici, 2014; Nayar, 2010).

Livingstone’s 2005 volume provides an apt reflection of the mediated public sphere. Like Berlant, she detects the importance of circulating texts in the constitution of contemporary publics. Livingstone’s contribution lies in identifying textual circulation as a form of media reception, evidencing the entanglement of publics and audiences. Scholars have historically juxtaposed these two categories: Audiences designated an assortment of private individual consumers of media, marked by passivity and brought together by fandom alone, while publics demanded of its constituents a political conscience and commitment to politicised deliberation. Livingstone challenges the framing of audiences and publics as divergent and instead proposes liberating the public domain from rigid formally political functions. Livingstone argued that publics and audiences “both are concerned with knowledge, discussion, participation, imagination of alternatives and implementation” (2005:29). In the same edited collection, Dayan adds that audiences and publics demand their members to jointly pay attention to media and share the same “participative frame” (2005:55). I argue that student Fallists engage as an emerging counterpublic network online largely by behaving as public audiences, who mediate hegemonic texts and understandings by exercising shared participative frames.

The social media researcher and scholar boyd (2008; 2011), discusses mediated publics from the vantage point of social networking sites (SNSs). For boyd, social networking sites have proliferated new spaces for engagement and expression online, reworking contemporary publics. For SNS users, publics refer to the local network to which they directly interact with, as well as the broader collective that is active online (2011:41).

Liberating the public sphere from a spatial metaphor, boyd's work brings forth the term "networked publics" in reference to this distinctive "techno-social context in which media practices take place" (Dobson, 2016:21). Networked publics share with audiences a sense of themselves as imagined communities bound by media reception. Information and ideas flow differently within networked publics, which boyd attributes to the affordances of a bits-based architecture. Public interactions are configured through the four distinct properties of persistence (automatic archiving), replicability (ease of duplication), scalability (visibility of data), and searchability (refinement in locating items or people) (boyd, 2011:46). These features of networked publics dissolve previous contextual boundaries. Space and time no longer limit interactions within networked publics. Public and private realms are not distinct in Habermas's idealised sense. One obvious dimension of this development is the unwanted incursion of privacy via insidious forms of online surveillance. In addition, as boyd points out, the audiences of SNS users are largely invisible and impossible to identify or quantify. SNSs also reconfigure the presumed divide between public and private contexts of communication. Chun (2016) describes this shift in terms of Keenan's metaphor of the window as a boundary between the public and private. The position of the individual relative to the window clarifies the status of their engagements. Behind the window designates the private sphere, within the confines of the home or office, from which individuals may observe and reflect. Once a subject steps out in front of the window, they share the public sphere with others, assume further responsibilities, and calibrate their actions visibly and with respect to others. For Chun, current digital platforms invert this boundary, since individuals now exercise their agency from the inside, or within the traditionally intimate sphere (2016:95). Put differently, political and civic action "are increasingly enabled within the locus of a digitally equipped private sphere" (Papacharissi, 2010:21).

2.2.4 Affective publics: The role of social networking sites

Papacharissi synthesises boyd's properties of networked publics with theories of affect. Papacharissi is especially interested in the role that SNSs play in political communication involving protest movements. SNS platforms invite users to both "feel their way into politics," and to circulate "affectively-charged expression" online (Papacharissi, 2014:118; Papacharissi, 2016:308). Affective publics refer to "networked public formations that are mobilised and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment" (Papacharissi, 2014:125). A fundamental aspect of affective publics is that they are more declarative than deliberative. The emphasis on the declarative dimension explicitly challenges Habermas' public sphere theory and subverts the public-private boundaries underpinning it. Affective publics capture precisely the elements of communication that are most maligned in the bourgeois public sphere. The affective publics theory allows us to conceptualise how the personal and political collide within

networked publics, as “expressed through mobilised support, release of tension, and general opinion expression” (Papacharissi, 2014:128).

Papacharissi summarises the concept of “affect” as “a form of pre-emotive intensity [that is] subjectively experienced,” which denotes the “not yet fully formed possibilities and potentialities” of expression (Papacharissi, 2016:311). The meaning-making process through which people express affect as an emotion or feeling is inherently disruptive to social order (Papacharissi, 2014:18). Papacharissi understands social networking sites like Twitter as “electronic elsewheres” which “support the expression of marginalised, liminal or underrepresented viewpoints” (2014:69). Affective publics is a conceptual framework through which to illustrate how “empowerment lies in liminality, in pre-emergence and emergence, or at the point at which new formations of the political are in the process of being imagined but not yet articulated” (Papacharissi, 2014:19). This quality of emergence and liminality defines Fallists’ “revolution-as-becoming” at its current stage of development (Molefe, 2015:32).

Papacharissi devotes her attention to Twitter, as a social networking platform with its own unique architecture and affordances. Twitter’s “ambient” or “always-on” engagement register among users, she argues, lends a distinctive “granular texture” to communication that is made up of the aggregation of fragmented, individually curated forms of expression (Papacharissi, 2014:131). These expressions form the basis of networked and affective publics which “materialise uniquely and leave distinct digital footprints” that can be followed by researchers (Papacharissi, 2014:127). Like Fraser, Papacharissi regards publics as “arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities” (2014:16). What Papacharissi’s work lacks is a situated account of affective publics, using the perspectives and frameworks of marginalised groups. As Schofield Clark identifies, the use of situated theoretical frameworks like Black Feminism can “further flesh out points of connection between impassioned individual expressions regarding experiences of oppression, and collective political consciousness and action” (2016:1122). My work attempts to fill some of these gaps.

2.3 Social networking sites, Twitter and affordances

This section of the literature review discusses key concepts and debates centred on digital media and the way that it shapes communication, resistance, and protest. I begin by grounding my work in the context of South Africa’s “mobile-centric” ecology of internet use (Walton, 2014). Twitter, and especially the medium of microblogging, is amenable to mobile usage given its basic interface and its text-centred format. After this initial grounding, I provide a review of theories of the “network society” and “networked individualism” (Castells, 2000b; Rainie & Wellman, 2012). This is followed by an outline of the debates between “realist” and “social constructivist” perspectives on technology, where I endorse a

perspective that focuses on the “affordances” of technologies that both constrain and enable social action (Hutchby, 2001:453). Following from this, I review Twitter research, identifying particular ways that the platform enables and constrains communication, resistance, and protest online. These repertoires inform the interpretive content analysis that follows.

2.3.1 Internet use and Twitter in South Africa

South Africa’s ecology of internet use is highly “mobile-centric” (Walton, 2014). This also applies to the ecology of Twitter use: According to World Wide Worx, 90% of Twitter users access the internet through a mobile device as of 2016 (2016:61). Given the predominance of per-second and per-bit mobile billing models, text is considerably less expensive than images or video to upload (Walton, 2014:451-452). Tweeting is thus an accessible platform relative to other SNSs. Recent estimates suggest that approximately 316 million regular monthly users populate Twitter worldwide. According to the latest Social Media Landscape Report by World Wide Worx (2017), Twitter’s South African user base now stands at 7.7 million, which marks a 40% increase from 2014 (Jones and Pitcher, 2015). In South Africa, Twitter usage has risen, albeit at a slower rate than other SNSs like Facebook or Youtube. The latter sites have experienced higher levels of growth from the population as a whole, but South Africa’s urban youth are disproportionately well-represented in Twitter’s user base (Willimse, 2016:19).

Black South Africans between the ages of 15 and 34, who are typically urban, fluent in English, and studying at educational institutions, make up an particularly connected “new wave” of internet users in South Africa (de Lanerolle, 2012; Walton & Leukes, 2013). de Lanerolle’s report finds that English language literacy is the single most important predictor of internet use, and that students are far more likely to use the internet than those in the workforce (2012:8-9). This cohort heavily relies upon smartphone architecture to access SNSs (de Lanerolle, 2012; Walton, 2013). Fallists fit these categories as young, urban, black students at universities that are fluent in English. Before conceptualising the ways that Fallists communicate over Twitter, I situate the study within theories of the networked communication and individualism.

2.3.2 The network and communication theory

Manuel Castells’s “network society” provides a launching point for the theorisation of online communication and technology. Manuel Castells defines the network society as arising from the intensification of global flows of capital, information, and technology. Castells’s analysis builds from an assertion of fundamental shift in social organisation and communication (Castells, 2000b; Hands, 2011). Through the proliferation on a global scale of information and communication technologies (ICTs) like social networking sites, networks overtake centralised organisational hierarchies as the most effective

“tools of instrumentality” (Castells, 2000a:15). Establishing and connecting to networks has also become the path to exercising power, and communication occurs within the “horizontality of networks” as opposed to overarching leadership hierarchies (Castells, 2011; Castells, 2012). In Castells’s conception of the network society, “power is multidimensional and organized [...] according to the interests and values of empowered actors” (Castells, 2012:7). In his offshoot concept of “smart mobs,” Rheingold adds that networks use “many possible paths to distribute information from any link to any other, [while being] self-regulated through flat governance hierarchies and distributed power” (2002:163).

Castells identifies a prevailing model of “networked sociability,” consisting of two central features: personalisation, meaning that networks develop out of flexible personal affinities, and peer group formation that takes the place of hierarchical relationships (2009:144). Castells tied networked sociability to youth culture in particular, which he suggests centres on the promotion of individual identity (2009). Loader, Vromen, & Xenos elaborated on the profile of the “networked young citizen” who favours network participation and personal branding over membership in civic organisations and whose “historical reference points are less likely to be those of modern welfare capitalism but, rather, global information networked capitalism” (2015:4). Rainie & Wellman (2012) furnish these conceptions, proposing that “networked individualism” is the overarching “operating system” of contemporary communication on platforms like SNSs. They argue “the hallmark of networked individualism is that people function more as connected individuals and less as embedded group members” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012:12). For Rainie & Wellman, this means that “sparsely knit networks of associates” have eclipsed tightly bounded networks in prevalence and importance. User interactions on SNSs reflect the “triple revolutions” of looser networks, Web 2.0, and mobile access (Rainie & Wellman, 2012:12).

Papacharissi adds that, within affective publics, networked individualism often fortifies counter-hegemonic senses of the self (2014:105). Papacharissi turns to Twitter as fertile ground for subversive micro-performances of marginalised identities, as a platform where microbloggers forcefully contend that “the personal is political.” Twitter affords the claiming of safe space that is simultaneously publicly shared and privately constructed (Papacharissi, 2014:112). Twitter permits autobiographical “self-storytelling [that] reflexively employ[s] performativity to traverse from private to public and back” (Papacharissi, 2014:98). Playfulness is crucial to this notion of performative traversal, since it is a mechanism through which to publicise and politicise everyday experiences. Play here involves the rearranging of normative behaviours, rituals, or linguistic conventions. Affect enfolds Twitter communication, situating individuals within broader “organically generated and affectively driven conversations. Agency is semantically and affectively accessed, and claims to power are performed” (Papacharissi, 2014:114).

2.3.3 Domestication and affordances

Scholars critique the network society theory for being wedded to technological determinism and instrumentalism and bereft of attention to context (Chiumbu, 2012; Hands, 2011; Wasserman, 2011). One way scholars have downplayed this determinism is by tempering utopian renderings of the inclusive potential of SNSs. Pointing out pervasive exclusion and inadequate infrastructure, “digital divide” research abounds, including within African media studies (de Beer, 2007; Janse van Rensburg, 2012). However, digital divide research tends to foreclose and conceal the agency of socially marginalised individuals online. Focusing on the digital divide reifies a “deficit model” to technology, which is applied in broad strokes to marginalised communities from an elite normative position (Brock, 2012; Brock, 2016; Florini, 2014). Jackson & Foucault Welles state that “networked spaces offer citizens most invisible in mainstream politics radical potentials for identity negotiation, visibility, and influence” (2016:399). SNSs can offer these networked spaces, but researchers should also caution against the notion that technology can automatically improve the lives of marginalised people simply by merit of being used (Brock, 2016).

Many scholars overcome technological determinism by turning their attention to the cultural processes of adoption of SNS technologies. Especially prevalent within African media studies is the framework of “domestication,” which refers to the “subjective appropriation of technology and views subjects’ use of technologies as active, creative and expressive” (Chiumbu, 2012:195). Domestication indicates an ongoing process of negotiation in everyday life, and aims to uncover the ways that users “tame” or “appropriate” technologies in a given cultural context (Chiumbu, 2012; Wasserman, 2011). Much of this research focuses particularly on the domestication of mobile technologies in contexts with greater infrastructural constraints, as compared to those faced by Western middle-class citizens, who are foregrounded in network society theories (Qiu, 2014:381). Domestication rests on a constructivist approach to technology, which centres on the social shaping of technology (SST) (Chiumbu, 2012:203).

Hutchby inverts the framing of SST by asking how technologies both enable and constrain social action (2001:453). He proposes a framework that seeks to reconcile the social constructivism of domestication and “realist” approaches that view technologies as consisting of inherent properties (2001:443). Hutchby draws from Gibson’s concept of “affordances,” which is applied to technologies. Hutchby suggests that technological affordances “constrain the ways that [technologies] can possibly be written or read” (2001:447). Thinking of the connection between technology and agency in terms of affordances shifts the conceptual terrain away from a narrow focus on effects and towards the recognition that technologies are both constraining and enabling (Hutchby, 2001:448). In this dissertation, I favour a conceptualisation of Twitter based on technological affordances that constrain and enable Fallists online.

2.3.4 Social networking sites and Twitter

Social networking sites are emblematic of “Web 2.0,” namely the phenomenon of diffusion of participation, interactivity and authorship online (Ekstrom, Olsson, & Shehata, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2012). The concept of convergence is also central to Web 2.0: While content generators and audiences remained largely separate in previous iterations of mediated communication, SNSs afford users the chance to occupy both roles simultaneously. Some scholars have celebrated SNSs as empowering media “producers” (Grinnell, 2009), whereas others decry the sites as tools that enhance the commodification and surveillance of communication (Cammaerts, 2008; Milan, 2015). For boyd & Ellison (2007), social networking sites (SNSs) permit users to do three standard things: create a public or quasi-public profile within a bounded system; identify other users in the system with whom they are connected; and “view and traverse” both their own list of connections, as well as those of others within the system. SNS users both augment existing relationships and facilitate the creation of new ones (Nayar, 2010). SNSs are distinct from the older set of online communication services, such as chat rooms and instant messaging, in that they do not merely connect users to new people, but also permit users to share their social networks publicly (boyd & Ellison, 2007:211).

Founded in 2006, Twitter allows its users to consume, produce, and share brief messages (“tweets”) of up to 140 characters. Twitter was conceived by its CEO, Jack Dorsey, as a “conversational microblog” enabling “ambient intimacy” between users (Granger, 2014; Rogers, 2014). Microblogging is the central feature of the Twitter platform, which consists of writing and publishing user-generated content in the form of brief messages. Microblogs are disseminated in real time. They often consist of short updates of “life on the go” to interested observers, and encompass quotidian and everyday communication (Garcia-Albacete & Theocharis, 2014; Zappavigna, 2012). Early studies of Twitter focused on the site as a tool for updating friends on daily activities (Zhao & Rosson, 2009). Twitter’s former tagline, “What are you doing?” summed up this utility. Developers and academics later identified that Twitter is also well-suited to bringing people together around shared experiences and topics; Twitter’s tagline changed to “What’s happening?” in November 2009, signalling a broadened context beyond individual activities and towards shared experiences and evaluations (Rogers, 2014; Zappavigna, 2012).

Twitter has a number of unique affordances that distinguish the platform from other SNSs: for one, Twitter consists of a basic user interface that is minimal, but also accommodating to mobile usage (Brock, 2012). This makes Twitter attractive to the Fallist cohort as described above. In addition, relative to other well-known SNSs, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, profile information is of lesser importance to Twitter users than microblogging itself. Tweets are usually disseminated publicly, rather than within bounded networks. Microblogging is therefore more oriented around publishing and broadcasting content, than it is

to maintaining close ties and thick profile information (Murthy, 2013:8). Imperative for microbloggers is the cultivation of “imagined audiences,” beyond their already-established social networks (Marwick & boyd, 2010). Tweets primarily target “the mirror image of the user”, who seeks to balance the performance of personal authenticity with phatic communication (Marwick and boyd, 2010:8). The platform “encourages the accumulation of more and more followers who are *aware* of a user’s published content” (Murthy, 2013:10, emphasis original). While Twitter communication takes place in the context of social networks, Twitter networks can be organised differently than other SNSs due to the affordances of the platform: They are often not bounded or localised.

Twitter also permits low reciprocity among its users. Twitter users have a separate list of “follower” and “following” profiles. This means that, distinct from SNSs like Facebook or LinkedIn, Twitter ties are by default asymmetrical, privileging the “sharing of opinion and information, rather than reciprocal social interaction” (Hughes, et al, 2012:561). A sizable follower list grants a degree of status and micro-celebrity online (Page, 2012). In addition, a significant majority of Twitter profiles are publicly visible, meaning that direct ties, or followers, make up only a portion of a user’s potential audience. Any user can observe public microblogs and redirect them to other users. Twitter enables personalised curation of identity, networks, and politics (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Chambers, 2013). Twitter provides a “technosocial context” for identity negotiation and self-presentation, where microbloggers hone a “networked self” (Dobson, 2016; Papacharissi, 2011). Rybas & Gajjala identify that, through SNSs like Twitter, “subjects produce selves [...] and engage in practices of everyday life” (2007:4).

There is a need for brevity on Twitter, which facilitates creativity and performativity (Papacharissi, 2014; Smith-Prei & Stehle, 2016). Due in part to the brevity of the microblogging medium, users employ Twitter primarily as a channel for evaluation and opinion-sharing, rather than deliberation. These evaluations are easily directed towards other users, and establish affiliation with them (Granger, 2014; Papacharissi, 2014; Zappavigna, 2012). Twitter enables a number of unique tools for addressing other users. A user may direct his or her tweet to certain other users, by mentioning them with the @ symbol. Retweeting (RT) is another Twitter function that allows users to post an existing message again, as “an informal recommendation system” (Liu, Liu & Li, 2012:445). In sharing another user’s content, the retweeter attributes a measure of importance, amusement, or usefulness for his or her audience (Heverin & Zach, 2012:35). Making visible the connections between users, the @ and retweet illuminate the networks that form online and pave the way for “searchable talk” (Granger, 2014; Zappavigna, 2012). Twitter also allows the embedding of URL hyperlinks and images within particular tweets. Shorteners such as tinyurl and bit.ly have become widespread through Twitter as tools to compress longer links.

Another important mechanism for formulating networks deriving from Twitter is the hashtag (#), which coordinates and directs traffic for messages around particular themes. Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira describe hashtags as “a user-generated collaborative argument on what is news” (2012:268). The hashtag operates as a “bottom-up classification scheme,” part and parcel of the “folksonomy” of Web 2.0 (Siapera, 2013:4). Hashtags can direct small networks of traffic to particular themes, and occasionally jump across different networks to “bridge ideas, actions, or communities” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:91). Bonilla & Rosa add that hashtags permit users to “performatively frame what comments are really about,” and, in the process, attach meanings to posts that are not immediately obvious (2015:5). As an “intertextual chain,” hashtags are central to my study of Fallist microblogging, since they are vessels for intertextuality and everyday resistance to the entanglements of individual, collective, and institutional domination (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015:5).

Romero, Meeder & Kleinberg (2011) make an important contribution by pointing to two distinct types of hashtags, as well as two qualities with which to measure the probability of their diffusion. Political hashtags generate discussion around controversial political figures or topics (e.g. #obama), whereas “idiom” hashtags are more conversational and consist of the combination of two or more common words (for instance, #cantlivewithout) (Romero et al., 2011:4). Reviewing a large data set, these scholars find that these two kinds of hashtags display deferring levels of stickiness and persistence. “Stickiness” describes the probability of a particular hashtag spreading from one user to another, while “persistence” names the degree to which repeated exposures to a hashtag increases the chance of users recirculating it. Romero et al. (2011) show that idiom hashtags tend to be very sticky but not very persistent, while political hashtags are highly persistent but less sticky. For Fallist microbloggers, Twitter provides a “techno-social context” through which everyday resistance is enacted. Everyday resistance takes on a highly mediated form, and makes use of the particular affordances of Twitter. In addition, microblogging nurtures an evaluative register of communication that is well-suited to Fallists’ “revolution-as-becoming” (Molefe, 2015:32). I further develop these ideas below.

2.3.5 Opinion leadership and crowdsourced elites on Twitter

As Gerbaudo states, “it is ironic that social media commonly held to facilitate the leaderslessness contemporary movements strive for have become precisely the means through which new forms of leadership emerge” (2012:143). Microblogging constitutes an intriguing medium through which to track these dynamics. While Twitter eschews traditional and hierarchical structures through networked structures of communication, I argue below that the Twitter platform and the specific medium of microblogging enables an organic form of “crowdsourced” thought leadership (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012).

Research on elite opinion leaders in the media derives from the pioneering work of Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955; 1957). Having conducted a variety of studies on voting patterns, Katz & Lazarsfeld conceived of a “two-step flow” theory. Their findings go against the now-outdated notion that mass media worked like a hypodermic needle that directly penetrated audiences. Instead, Katz & Lazarsfeld argued that “influences stemming from the mass media first reach opinion leaders, who, in turn, pass on what they read and hear to those of their everyday associates for whom they are influential” (1957:61).

Contemporary scholars of digital media continue to stress the relevance of opinion leadership on SNSs (Gerbaudo, 2012; Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Gerbaudo (2012) critiques the notion of the “horizontal” of networks that Castells’s framework has proposed. Gerbaudo contends that opinion leadership is an “ineliminable element of the kind of informal politics nurtured by direct action groups” (2012:24). Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira (2012) take this contention a step further when they analyse “#Egypt” Twitter posts from January and February 2011 amidst calls to remove President Hosni Mubarak from power. Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira similarly argue that “digital platforms do not rob movements of leaders. But they do permit a distributed or ‘crowdsourced’ form of leadership based on mechanisms that reward those more involved in mobilisation, and the reporting and curating of information” (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012:279). These scholars identify a select number of “crowdsourced elites” on Twitter – bloggers, activists, and informed citizens communicating about #Egypt. Jackson & Foucault Welles (2016) have since advanced the concept of crowdsourced elites among activists in their study of Twitter in the wake of Mike Brown’s murder in Ferguson, Missouri. These scholars provide an important contribution by linking the concept of crowdsourced elites with the concept of counterpublics. In the case of Twitter activism in the wake of Ferguson, racial justice activists composed a vocal “emerging counterpublic” on Twitter. Through mentions and retweets, supportive users aimed to make select “counterpublic elites” more visible (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:405). In the initial days following Brown’s murder, users prioritised the practice of retweeting, amplifying the messages of these counterpublic elites. This approach gave way to a “shift in emergent strategy” based more heavily on mentions than retweets. Through mentions, users reached out to mainstream elites and sought to grow the network by endorsing these counterpublic elites beyond the context of specific messages (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:405).

2.3.6 “Black Twitter” and Signifyin’

Researchers have offered relevant insights to the South African Fallist context, and illuminated some of the affordances of Twitter, through studies on “Black Twitter.” In a broad sense, Black Twitter encapsulates the phenomenon in which African Americans use Twitter at a rate disproportionate to their demographic representation, however the phenomenon also refers to a community of Twitter users and

their set of digitally-enabled cultural conventions that play out on Twitter (Brock, 2016). As Brock points out, a nexus of technological affordances and cultural conventions paved the way for Black Twitter, which is “contravening popular conceptions of black capitulation to the digital divide” (Brock, 2012:545). Brock highlights Twitter’s “malleability” as conducive to the adoption of the platform by African Americans (2012:535). Particularly within the African American community, users are far more likely to access the internet on a mobile device than by broadband: since its inception, Twitter differentiated itself from other SNSs in its amenability to mobile usage. This focus in term paved the way for tweeting, much like instant messaging, to become a part of everyday communication. The Black Twitter phenomenon is reflected in the fact that African Americans log on to Twitter at a much higher rate than their white counterparts (Brock, 2012:536).

A number of scholars point to the cultural conventions that coalesce on Black Twitter. The major theme in this literature is the practice of Signifyin.’ In broad terms, Signifyin’ refers to black oral traditions that valorise deftness, invention, and wordplay through implication, goading, or boasting (Florini, 2014; Knight Steele, 2016). Signifyin’ articulates black cultural identity and its shared referents (Brock, 2016). As Gates (1988) has identified, Signifyin’ distinguishes itself by referring to a nonlinear and rhetorical process of signification based on the “suspension” of explicit meaning. In an alteration of the Saussurean linguistics of “signifying,” the signifier becomes a “playfully multivalent interlocutor” (Brock, 2016:6). Rather than a straightforward chain of signifiers, Signifyin’ consists of “rhetorical games” and “luxuriates” in the paradigmatic axis rather than the syntagmatic axis (Gates, 2014). Signifyin’ is culturally coded and intertextual, and “authors reuse motifs from previous works, but alter them and signify upon them so as to create their own meanings” (Knight Steele, 2016:84). Signifyin’ consists of referencing particular “cultural touchpoints of humour, spectacle, or crisis to construct discursive racial identity” (Brock, 2012:537). The immediacy of Twitter as a Web 2.0 technology also invites audience engagement in real time, particularly by eliciting call-and-response (Brock, 2012). Florini focuses on the practice of “dissing” within Signifyin.’ Superficially, dissing merely consists of clever personal attacks, but Florini positions the practice as a light-hearted verbal game that encourages creativity and social participation from audiences who function as secondary participants (2014:229).

As Brock points out, “Black discursive culture – specifically Signifyin’s focus on invention, delivery, ritual, and audience participation – maps well onto Twitter’s focus on rapid discussion between groups of connected users” (2012:545). Focusing on these elements, researchers point to the hashtag as the ideal vessel for Signifyin’ in Black Twitter. Hashtags exemplify the practice of Signifyin’ by simultaneously collapsing sign, signifier, and signified into one (Brock, 2012). In addition, they can conjure larger assemblages of users beyond direct follower-followee networks, within “emergent, permeable meso-level

spaces (Sharma, 2013:50). An “imbrication of aesthetics and politics,” Signifyin’ on Twitter fosters solidarity within the black community (Florini, 2014:226). At the same time, many scholars understand Signifyin’ and Black Twitter as a whole to be a form of everyday resistance against dominant discourse online. Brock (2012) recognises Signifyin’ as an “intervention on white public space,” given that whiteness is tacitly normative online (Brock, 2012:541). For Florini, Signifyin’ allows Black Twitter users to reject post-racial discourse online by centring their racial identity (Florini, 2014:235). Sharma adds that Black Twitter hashtags in particular “interrupt the whiteness of the Twitter network” (2013:48). Black Twitter has also been identified by journalists as an ascendant phenomenon in South Africa (Serino, 2013; Sosibo, 2015). South African Black Twitter is mediated by diasporic blackness, but also contains distinct cultural and linguistic conventions. Historian Nomalanga Mkhize describes Black Twitter as subverting the white and suburban hegemony of internet usage (Serino, 2013; Sosibo, 2015). South Africa’s Black Twitter thus forms a counterpublic network that, in Fraser’s terms, serves a “contestatory function in stratified societies” (1990:67).

Scholarship of Black Twitter has been met with scepticism and criticism about who should conduct this research and on what terms. A major concern is that participation online becomes “spoken into existence by the blinkered gaze of academia” (Brock, 2015:1087). The very legitimate possibility that increased public visibility of black people online may be co-opted, exploited, or misrepresented by dominant interests from outside the community has tempered enthusiasm for these studies (Brown, 2014; Newitz, 2014). These reservations were brought to the fore in 2014, after a USC Annenberg description of a forthcoming major research project on Black Twitter surfaced. The project initially appeared to be coordinated by three white men who were looking at live tweets about the TV series *Scandal* as a point of entry into these studying communities. Having these particular individuals at the helm of such a major project indicated low reflexivity on the part of the research team, potentially reifying the power dynamics that Black Twitter subverts. In addition, many critics interpreted the choice to focus on *Scandal* as, at best, highly restrictive, and at worst, devaluing to Black Twitter as a community of users and as a phenomenon in its own right (Brown, 2014; Newitz, 2014). Brock identifies that “this approach seemed to make an instrumental correlation between Black Twitter’s information needs and *Scandal* viewers’ social media presence” (2015:1086). In South Africa, concerns have been raised that studying Black Twitter exoticises black people and further normalises the already-normalised whiteness of the platform (Sosibo, 2013). These are valid concerns, and I advocate strongly on behalf of both self-reflexivity and cultural continuity as an ethical imperative for researchers (Christians, 2007). I also echo Brock in championing critical frameworks in studies of racialized communities (2012; 2016). Only by adopting

critical theories and research frameworks can researchers challenge hegemonic framings of race and also identify technologies as ideologically laden rather than value-neutral.

2.3.7 Social networking sites, connective action, and cloud protesting

The affordances of social networking sites have informed new theories of how activism and contentious politics play out online. SNSs allow more opportunities to experience these realms, and, more importantly put forward a new underlying logic of mobilisation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Milan, 2015a). Castells views social movements as increasingly crucial forces for social change in the network society. Movements “exercise counterpower through a process of autonomous communication, free from the control of those holding institutional power” (2012:9). Internet communication technologies like SNSs are fundamental “because they provide the platform for continuing, expansive networking practice that evolves with the changing shape of the movement” (2012:21). In contrast to traditional conceptions of collective action, which are primarily concerned with centralised forms of mobilisation, Bennett & Segerberg (2013) propose that SNSs introduce a new analytical category of “connective action.” Through the traditional collective action frames of social movements, organisations would “broker” formal engagement and consolidate identities among their members. This logic of collective action carried over to online media platforms, which “serve as tools to help actors do what they were already doing” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:33). Connective action instead thrives on personal action frames, where “taking public action or contributing to a common good becomes an act of personal expression and recognition or self-validation achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:36). Organisations may incite connective action by identifying issue campaigns, and tapping into “loose coalitions” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:11). Alternatively, connective action may arise independently of organisations through public assembly of crowds, as demonstrated by popular uprisings like Occupy, the Arab Spring, and the *Indignadas* movements. These aggregations of face-to-face activists arise more spontaneously and engage less-bounded networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:89).

Milan (2015a; 2015b) similarly highlights SNSs as responsible for transforming “the micro-interactional level of collective action” (2015b:60). SNSs both facilitate more interactions and make users’ feelings tangible online, thus altering the “materiality” of collective action (Milan, 2015b:55). Milan proposes that SNSs contour the latest of three stages in protest media: The first corresponded to Bennett and Segerberg’s conceptualisation of traditional collective action, where the movement itself was responsible for disseminating its ideologies and campaigns. This approach sanctioned the development of properly “social movement media” (Downing, 2011), in the form of pamphlets or radio programs created by the movements themselves. A second stage, enabled by early iterations of the internet, fostered mass coalitions through widely shared media on websites. This stage coincided with notions of horizontality as

the *modus operandi* of collective action. Milan coins the term, “cloud protesting,” to refer to the third stage, which follows the emergence of SNSs and enhances individuals’ *direct* interactions. The magnitude, frequency, and breadth of micro-interactions have all risen during this stage. Through social networking sites in particular, “informal amorphous collectives have taken centre stage” in place of brokered collective action (Milan, 2013:40).

Milan argues that contemporary protest matches a model of cloud computing. In cloud computing, information is shared and processed over a remote internet connection, using a networked pool of computing resources (Mell & Grance, 2011:2). In the cloud, computing capabilities can be harnessed rapidly, on demand, and without additional approval once a user has been authorised within the system. This model applies to the structure of communication and resistance within protest movements (Milan, 2015a:893). The movement itself no longer needs to be a localised site of collective coordination. Instead, through cloud protesting, authorised individuals can engage in contentious politics remotely, and engage “magmatic constellations of pre-existing interpersonal connections, interactions, and networks” (Milan, 2015b:60). Milan is cautious about this shift, arguing that, in the era of cloud protesting, “The collective ‘we’ is reduced to an intermediary stage,” rather than an end in itself, and collective action is a “filter” that contextualises the self (2015b:67). In addition, the “politics of visibility” stands in for collective identity. In her analysis of the ways that these politics play out on SNSs, Milan draws from Collins’s theory of interactional rituals, which produce “momentarily shared reality” through emotional engagement (Milan, 2015b:61).

2.3.8 Hashtag activism

The Twitter hashtag has emerged as an ascendant artefact where marginalised people “talk back” and “culture jam” a range of oppressive cultural depictions and practices in everyday contexts (Horeck, 2014; Meyer, 2014). While hashtags often confer meaning under the umbrella of activist movements, they exist as their own unit of resistance and discussion (Tynes, Schuschke, and Noble, 2016). For Gunn (2015), “hashtag feminism” as pursued by black women, emerged as a renewed commitment to feminism’s second-wave imperative of consciousness-raising, in itself a form of radical praxis. Gunn argues that to evaluate hashtag activism solely through the prism of offline action or awareness neglects its emancipatory potential. Pejorative labels like “slacktivism” are in keeping with the historical trajectory through which critics dismissed consciousness-raising as selfish and futile. Hashtag activism can allow for “the work of raising one’s own consciousness, and to be in dialogue with other women of colour engaged in similar pursuits” (Gunn, 2015:12). Clark concurs on this point, arguing that, “whereas 1970s consciousness-raising groups attracted self-identifying feminists, today’s hashtags reach far beyond the feminist community, and [...] may even enter the realm of mainstream media” (2014:1110).

3 Research methodology

This section details the research methodology employed in the study. Some quantitative measures drawn from social network analysis were employed here to indicate the influence and popularity of the crowdsourced elite. In addition, the interpretive content analysis consisted in part of counting the prevalence of evaluative frames. However, the bulk of this analysis involves qualitative methods, and the aforementioned indicators were employed in order to enhance qualitative insights. Each of the methods I used is explained below. I begin by describing the qualitative research paradigm, which relies on researchers' interpretive practices. I position my research in terms of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Consistent with qualitative textual analysis, methods were honed and clarified here in hermeneutical circles: the tweets that I analysed informed my understandings of Fallism as a whole, and these contextual understandings also made sense of tweets (Krippendorff, 2004).

3.1 Qualitative research paradigm

Qualitative research comprises of interpretive practices that generate understandings of phenomena, and their meanings to people that are embedded within social worlds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Salmons, 2016). Statistical procedures are typically outside the realm of qualitative research (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Qualitative inquiry entails a variety of methods, materials, perspectives, and disciplinary insights. Researchers must position themselves, both in terms of their own subjectivity and their abstract "interpretive paradigm" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This paradigm consists of three factors: beliefs about the nature of the social world and the role of context and construction in reality (ontology), beliefs about the nature of knowledge and whether it is objective (epistemology), and proposed methods for obtaining knowledge (methodology) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kim, 2016; Snape & Spencer, 2003). This study's paradigm consists of a historical realist ontology, since historical circumstances are understood as producing the realities of race, class, and gender; a subjectivist-constructivist epistemology, in that meanings are subjective; and hermeneutical methodologies, since the analysis consists of the interpretation of texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

Qualitative methods of analysis were conducted here in hermeneutic circles: textual components like words, phrases, and hashtags were interpreted through other contextual materials, and, reciprocally, these components also add to the understanding of contextual texts. Consistent with this hermeneutical methodology, research questions and answers arose together and informed each other. My own cultural understandings similarly inform and are informed by the analysed texts (Ahuvia, 2001; Krippendorff, 2004; Reagan, 2009; Sweeney & Brock, 2015). As a researcher, I acknowledge that textual interpretation

is tentative rather than final, and also that my own cultural perspective plays a considerable role in the analysis (Krippendorff, 2004:87).

3.2 Conducting qualitative research on Twitter

Through Twitter, researchers can tap into “the zeitgeist of the internet, its users, and often beyond” (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014:250). Twitter offers a sizeable, real-time, and wide-ranging corpus of textual material and artefacts (Brock, 2016; Thelwall, 2014). Studies focusing on Twitter have increased considerably in recent years, as has the breadth of interest in the platform. Research on Twitter emanates from a variety of domains, including computer science and marketing, as well as the social sciences and humanities (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014). Spanning both naturalistic and experimental methodologies, researchers employ a variety of methods and tools to analyse Twitter data.

The surging interest in Twitter and other SNSs revolves, to a substantial degree, around what is known as “Big Data.” As a phenomenon, Big Data refers less to an absolute increase in information as it does to the “capacity to search, aggregate, and cross-reference large data sets” (boyd & Crawford, 2012:663). Big data on Twitter clears the path for a range of empirical insights. However, analysing large data sets also has some distinct drawbacks for researchers. Twitter demographics are not generalizable to larger populations — this is particularly the case given the lucrative and misleading practices of link farming and bot selling. Big data research may therefore fail to distinguish active users from occasional ones, and authentic users from bots (Brock, 2015:1085). Researchers also must be aware that powerful interests evade regulation or transparency of Big Data. Enormous amounts of profile data is extracted outside the purview of the public by corporations and state surveillance agencies (boyd & Crawford, 2012; Sharma, 2013).

Big Data studies privilege “breadth” over “depth” of data (Brock, 2016). In employing quantitative methods, these studies can circulate uncritical perspectives of technology and culture and of their embedded ideologies (Brock, 2015). In this dissertation, I approach Twitter as a dynamic site with which to engage in qualitative research. I accentuate the call to approach qualitative research as “deeper data” in contradistinction to Big Data, and in the process, undermine the idea that smaller data sets indicate “a lack of complexity effort, or magnitude” (Brock, 2016:1085). This dissertation focuses on the interpretive practices required for deeper data research. In the following paragraphs, I elaborate on the specific research methods employed here. Methods of observation and social network analysis identified a crowdsourced elite microblogger, whose tweets compose the focal texts for an interpretive content analysis. I collected tweets from their account over a six-month period between the months of April and

September of 2016, using the NodeXL software package. Before detailing the content analysis phase, it is necessary to provide a review of the exploratory phase.

3.3 Crowdsourced elites: Identifying focal texts through SNA and observation

This research design emerged in a process. The original plan for this study was to capture and analyse tweets and hashtags produced exclusively by the Fallist movements. In early 2016, I began an exploratory stage of observing and exploring discussions on the Twitter accounts of Fallist movements, in a process referred to as “lurking” by online ethnographers (Bosch, 2008; Davies, 2008). Through the NodeXL software package, I collected and compiled this data. The process of observation and collection prompted an adjustment to the research design: I began to recognise the centrality of certain individual accounts within Fallist Twitter discussions. In many cases, tweets by individuals were amplified by the movements themselves. However, this became especially visible through collecting hashtag networks: Within hashtag networks, individuals who openly identified with the Fallist movements emerged organically as “crowdsourced elites” that drove discussions (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Techniques of social network analysis (SNA) were applied during this exploratory stage in order to aid the identification of Fallist crowdsourced elites. As I explain in the findings section, I approached this process by collecting tweets within networks of Fallist hashtags. I used NodeXL to collect this data, and also to calculate metrics on the most prominent individual users within the networks. This data informed the selection of focal texts for the interpretive content analysis that follows.

In-degree and Betweenness centrality were the two vertex (user) metrics I calculated through NodeXL. The higher these metrics, the more popular and influential a particular user is deemed to be within a network. In-degree is a measurement of social connectivity (Xu et al, 2014:7) and popularity (Hansen, Schneiderman & Smith, 2011:72) within a network. In-degree is calculated by the number of incoming connections towards a node. In the context of a Twitter hashtag network, this refers to the number of other users who retweet or mention a particular user. Betweenness centrality, by comparison, identifies users’ positions within a network. The Betweenness centrality metric measures users’ “bridging social capital,” meaning their ability to connect different sub-communities of users (Ellison et al, 2014:856). Users with a high Betweenness centrality score are the users who directly connect clusters of different users, and are therefore especially *influential* within a network.

Continuous observation over the course of several months informed the decision to focus on one individual Twitter account here. Not only did SNA data point to this individual, but they were also consistent and frequent users of the platform over the course of the entire sample period. Other microbloggers were far more sporadic in their use of the platform. The tweets of this specific

microblogger indicated sustained engagement with issues of decoloniality and student activism. In addition, as I argue below, this account displayed the kind of evaluative discourse that exemplified Fallist communication. This combination of popularity, influence, and breadth of content made these tweets the focus of my study on Fallist microblogging. Tweets by this individual microblogger comprise the sample of “focal texts” (Ahuvia, 2001) for the interpretive content analysis that follows. Through this open research process, I determined that the individual level of analysis provided the best window into Fallist communication and resistance in an everyday context. Rather than conducting the analysis in a purely reactive way by analysing a set of already-defined hashtags or campaigns, the individual-centred approach made it more possible to track Fallist discourse and networking as it emerged. Analysing everyday communication made possible a consideration of Fallism in terms of a “revolution as becoming” (Molefe, 2015).

3.4 Research problem and question

This study explores the use of Twitter by a microblogger who has emerged organically as a “crowdsourced elite” among Fallists (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Following the initial process of crowdsourced elite identification, I used the working concept of “evaluative frames” in my research question and content analysis. The term combines theoretical insights from three frameworks: affective publics, functional linguistics and media frames. I focus on “expressions of sentiment” on Twitter (Papacharissi, 2014:125). As I reveal below, Papacharissi’s contention that tweeting is more declarative than deliberative matched my findings. The microblogger’s tweets were declarative in that they “(re)presented the self in reference to a general conversation, exhibiting a measure of networked individualism” (Papacharissi, 2014:105). I was subsequently drawn to the work of Zappavigna (2011), who fleshes out this idea by approaching tweeting from a functional linguistic perspective. Zappavigna identifies that tweets consist of “evaluative language” that generates “affiliation” between users. I use her definition of evaluation as “a domain of interpersonal meaning where language is used to build power and solidarity by adopting stances and referring to other texts” (Zappavigna, 2011:794). Fallist communication and the microblogger’s tweets in particular were replete with evaluations; this directed me towards categorising tweets according to their evaluations in the interpretive content analysis. To round out this framework, I invoke the concept of media frames. Media frames make up the active process in which communicators interpret reality, by identifying problems and solutions (cited by Pointer, 2015: 25-26). Gitlin describes media frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organise discourse” (1980:7). Through induction, my content analysis identifies the microblogger’s prevailing evaluative frames. Two qualitative research questions were posed:

- I. What kinds of evaluative frames were made by the crowdsourced elite microblogger?
- II. How did Twitter set the parameters of the microblogger's communication and resistance?

3.5 Qualitative content analysis:

Here I provide more detail on the method and procedure of content analysis applied to the data. The content analysis method has a long history of usage within media and communications research, as it is content-sensitive and well-suited to analysing documents (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007:108). Terminology differs depending on the exact variety of content analysis, but the defining feature of the method is that it condenses or distils information through categorisation (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Fick, 2006). Researchers draw inferences and assign categories at the level of texts, words, phrases, or other units of communication, with the desired outcome of describing a phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007:108).

Content analysis was traditionally conceived by researchers as a pure quantitative method through which to measure the frequency, and by extension the significance, of analytic units. Various studies cite Berelson's (1952) definition as a point of entry to content analysis: "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Johnson, 2016). In keeping with this positivist epistemology, quantitative content analysis strives for objectivity through statistical validity, generalisability, and clearly defined coding rules. These rules are to be abided by through intercoder reliability tests. The focus on manifest content, as distinguished from latent content, means that only the most obvious and incontrovertible meanings of a text should be considered under quantitative content analysis (Ahuvia, 2001:141).

The reliance on manifest content and resulting unsuitability for grasping contextual, connotative, or latent meanings, and the supposition that the most meaningful content appears most frequently in a text, detract from the insightfulness of the traditional quantitative content analysis method. The qualitative content analysis method was developed to account for the limitations of its quantitative counterpart, while maintaining a foundation of systematic categorisation to describe and interpret empirical data. Qualitative content analysis is a "method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278). Texts are analysed in terms of the "context of communication" in which they are produced (Mayring, 2004). Researchers can transcend manifest textual elements in attempts to discover connotative meanings of texts (Ahuvia, 2001; Cho & Lee, 2014). The differences between the two approaches are not always clearly drawn — the content analysis method has been criticised as beholden to the ideals of quantitative methodologies by humanities scholars (Fick, 2006:315). Scholars have described quantitative versus qualitative content analysis as gradations of the same method: proponents of the former have

increasingly embraced elements of qualitative analysis, and many qualitative techniques principally involve counting (Krippendorff, 2004).

In addition to distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative content analysis, content analysis researchers also differentiate between inductive and deductive categorisation. This describes the differences in reasoning processes that yield categories. Content analysis allows for variations of either approach. The inductive approach encourages more openness and revision of categories that emerge from the textual material, and is appropriate when there is limited pre-existing knowledge about the phenomenon under study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007:113). Researchers take specific material and condense these parts into more general insights. Conversely, deductive coding engages with existing theory from the outset. Deductive coding is oriented around testing a theory's appropriateness, and ultimately challenging, supporting, or extending its scope (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1282). Deductive coding requires a more explicit operationalisation and structure, but is inherently limited by its theory's predetermined focus (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). An inductive approach was followed here, since Fallist microblogging remains an understudied phenomenon. I embraced the value of "theoretical sensitivity" in categorisation, which is described below.

3.5.1 Interpretive content analysis

This dissertation employs a method of interpretive content analysis. Relative to other content analysis variations, interpretive content analysis comes closest to grounded theory in its emphasis on inductive coding and openness to emergent topics, interpretation, and the comparison between categories. The approaches differ with respect to the emphasis placed on generating theory: interpretive content analysis is mostly concerned with providing description rather than theory.

In interpretive content analysis, texts are not understood simply as repositories of meaning; they are "rendered meaningful by the perspective and understanding of the reader for specific purposes" (Drisko & Maschi, 2015:67). Interpretive content analysis "recognises the context-bound nature of interpretation" (Ahuvia, 2001:149). The emphasis on interpretation places greater demands on researchers than traditional content analyses. Researchers of interpretive content analysis require a degree of theoretical sensitivity, which is a concept borrowed from grounded theory (Ahuvia, 2001; Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Barney Glaser (1978) named two components of theoretical sensitivity in research: the first is a personal quality of openness to emergent themes in data, rather than an attachment to prior hypotheses. The second component is a familiarity with the literature surrounding the phenomenon under study, in terms of potential variables and concepts (Glaser, 1978:3). I strove to embrace and implement both of these tenets throughout the analytic process.

The strength of interpretive content analysis lies in its flexibility. Interpretive content analysis requires researchers to revise quantitative content analysis standards: strict coding rules, independent coding, and intercoder reliability tests are not appropriate, since they shun interpretation on the part of researchers for the sake of statistical validity. However, interpretive content analysis researchers should strive for public justifiability and reliability (Ahuvia, 2001:146). Ahuvia suggests that interpretive content analysis is best conducted collaboratively, since this increases the level of theoretical sensitivity (2001:145). A collaborative analysis was outside the realm of possibility for this project, given financial and time constraints. Unlike the traditional quantitative approach, interpretive content analyses allow for both manifest and latent coding. Indeed, as Ahuvia points out, “interpretive content analysis is specially designed for latent content analysis, in which researchers go beyond quantifying the most straightforward denotative elements in a text” (200:139). Interpretive content analysis provides an ideal method through which to both summarise data and interpret latent or connotative meanings (Ahuvia, 2001:144; Drisko & Maschi, 2015:65).

3.5.2 Analytic process

As Elo & Kyngäs’ (2007) describe, the analytic process of qualitative content analysis consists of three main phases: preparation, organisation, and reporting. I provide a brief overview of these first two phases here, and the reporting phase is discussed in the findings section. The preparation phase sets the groundwork for the study to follow: researchers decide on units of analysis, sampling, and determine whether to tackle manifest content or latent content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007:10). Units of analysis are the chosen objects of the study, and can range from individual words to entire interviews or transcripts (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004:106). Elo & Kyngäs point out that the best units of analysis tend to be between these two extremes, in order to avoid either fragmenting or overcomplicating the analysis (2007:110). Given Twitter’s 140 character protocol, tweets are regarded here as ideal units of analysis.

The units of analysis here are the tweets generated by the crowdsourced elite microblogger. The sampling technique was individual and temporal, focusing on tweets by the microblogger over a defined timeframe. This particular type of purposive sampling offers more contextually rich insights than would be possible in other sampling procedures, where data is filtered by particular types of interactions or keywords (Herring, 2004:11). The analysis consists of texts which were produced within the six-month period between 1 April and 30 September 2016. This sample size was selected because of its sufficiently representative breadth of tweets. This timing enabled me to focus on everyday resistance beyond specific campaigns. A total of 1,688 tweets were analysed and categorised. Tweets are by design brief and fragmented, and a great deal of their meaning is connotative. Onus falls on readers to unpack subtleties of meaning within tweets. The categories employed here interpreted evaluations rather than coding manifest

content alone (Ahuvia, 2001). As Ahuvia (2001:142) describes, this process requires researchers to combine individual elements in a text in order to understand the underlying meaning of the whole. Interpretations are not objective, and qualitative researchers hope to be judged on insightfulness rather than statistical validity (Ahuvia, 2001:148-149). In the organisation phase of inductive varieties of content analysis, researchers need to take three main steps: open coding, categorisation, and abstraction. Open coding involves an initial parsing of the data by writing numerous notes and potential headings (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007:109). Open coding is followed by a process of comparing, reducing, and condensing categories. Categories are developed with the purpose of increasing understanding of the phenomenon. Categories are named according to “content-characteristic words” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007:111). Finally, in the abstraction process, researchers determine an appropriate description of the research topic.

Throughout the organisation process, I recognised that developing categories around content-specific themes (i.e., of topics or campaigns highlighted by the microblogger) would yield less rich insights into the affordances of microblogging than would more interpretive categories based on evaluative frames. While content-specific categories would adequately describe manifest content, relying upon manifest content as a rubric for analysis would also have severely constrained potential insights. While I still recognised and noted specific topics, I decided that categorising them would have unduly complicated the analysis while offering little insights into the affordances of the platform. I instead set my sights on categorising the evaluative frames of the tweets. The evaluative frames emerged inductively and were revised following an initial period of analysis (Marying, 2004). I developed five distinct categories of evaluative frames: trauma and exasperation (TR), pride and care (PR), resentment (RE), play (PL), and mobilising (MO). Where none of these were apparent, I coded a tweet as “unclear” (UC).

The abstraction process drew from Papacharissi’s theory of affective publics on Twitter. Papacharissi argued that affective publics “are convened discursively around similarities or differences in sentiment” (2014:133). The defining feature of affective publics is that they are more declarative than deliberative. The theory of affective publics connects to theories of counterpublics, which are constructed discursively by people who oppose and circumvent normative conventions of public discourse (Warner, 2002). After categorising the tweets accordingly, I focused on identifying evaluations and “then articulating interpretive links between those behaviours and the larger concepts” (Herring, 2004:14). I describe these discursive behaviours in greater detail in the findings and discussion section below.

3.6 Research ethics

I conducted my research in terms of Christians’s ethical imperative of cultural continuity. Christians urged researchers to resist rational or impartial “prescriptions” in their analyses of communities on the

margins, and to respect their internal ethics (2007:438). Cultural continuity is also an important position because it compels researchers to derive their theoretical perspectives directly from the communities they examine (Brock, 2016:6).

The text that is analysed in my study consists solely of public tweets. The dissemination and visibility of these tweets by other parties is acknowledged in Twitter's privacy policy (2016a), including by universities and researchers that can "analyse the information for trends and insights." Twitter's terms of service agreement recommends users "only provide content that you are comfortable sharing with others" (2016b). The terms of service also states: "By submitting, posting or displaying Content on or through the Services, you grant us a worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty-free license (with the right to sublicense) [...] This license authorizes us to make your Content available to the rest of the world and to let others do the same" (2016b). Twitter users forgo confidentiality of their public tweets when they share them. This research was therefore conducted in a manner that is consistent with the "jurisdictional framework" of the platform as outlined by Twitter (Markham & Buchanan, 2012:8).

Twitter's policies clearly grant permission to researchers to view and collect tweets (Ruest & Milligan, 2016). This ongoing public status is also reflected whenever tweet IDs can be subsequently viewed — it would not be possible to view tweets if their public status was not upheld by those who wrote them. Wherever I identified a tweet that was no longer publicly available, I removed it from analytic consideration. I do not believe, however, that this public status of tweets entitles any researcher to indiscriminately collect and republish data. Sensitivity to the context of tweeting is crucial in research. As Zimmer (2010) points out, in many cases, users can expect their Twitter streams to remain "practically obscure," whether due to the sheer volume of tweets in circulation at any given time, or because their content may not be conducive to reaching a major audience. My research design revealed that practical obscurity was not applicable in this context. The tweets analysed here were written by a select "crowdsourced elite" microblogger, who regularly and visibly engaged with politicised issues, expressed their own subjectivity, exuded popularity and influence within Fallist networks, and who indicated no desire for practical obscurity. My interpretation is that the microblogger actively sought out increased visibility and micro-celebrity for themselves through Twitter.

In their publication supported by the Association of Internet Research, Markham & Buchanan (2012) offer an important perspective regarding online ethics. These scholars offer guidelines, rather than an absolute set of codes, on pursuing an ethical research process. They compel scholars to think through the degrees of harm, vulnerability, and identifiable information that may arise within the course of internet research. Each of the above issues reflects tensions in research, whether between different parties and

their interests, public and private contexts of communication, or between objects and subjects of study (Markham & Buchanan, 2012:6-7). They advise continuous reflection on ethics throughout the research process. I proceeded in this analysis in terms of an ethical imperative of anonymization in analysis. With input from the department's ethics committee, I reached the decision that anonymisation was the most vulnerability- and harm-minimising approach. Anonymisation was viewed as especially important given the context of expulsions that have been levied on students on some campuses. Anonymisation was encouraged in the feedback I received from members of the department's ethics committee. I therefore do not directly cite any specific tweets from the microblogger's account in the analysis. I do, however, analyse specific hashtags: this is an important element of the textual analysis and also maintains anonymisation.

I opted for naturalistic, rather than experimental, methods of inquiry in my study. There are some apparent weaknesses of my chosen approach, which other methods could have addressed: for instance, cyberethnographic researchers recommend following up observation with direct communication and/or participation with subjects, which generates "theories of doing" (Bosch, 2008; Davies, 2008; Rybas & Gajjala, 2007; Senft, 2013). Cyberethnography could have facilitated a more reflexive research design, and enabled me to directly probe meanings with informants themselves (Davies, 2008:84). However, I resolved that social network analysis and textual interpretation were the priorities of this research project. I did not want to interfere with the way the microblogger was using the platform during the sample period. I also determined that the extensive, "longitudinal commitment" needed for ethnography to go along with textual analysis was beyond the scope of this dissertation (Senft, 2013:348).

The stated methods of analysis reflect an attempt to consider contexts of communication within the framework of naturalistic inquiry. Tweets were produced for the microblogger's own purposes (Herring, 2004:10). While data has been anonymised, I designed the study with specificity. I sought to gain insight into Fallist networks and discourse on Twitter, while keeping the focus of analysis on the interpretation of texts and networks. This attention to context informed the decision to capture and review all tweets from the microblogger over a period of time, rather than merely collecting isolated keywords or hashtags. The emphasis on evaluative frames rather than manifest content also entails considerably more theoretical sensitivity than a traditional content analysis procedure (Glaser, 1978). The analysis was conducted following an extended literature review period and observation.

3.7 Twitter data collection

I used the NodeXL Pro software package for data collection. NodeXL allows researchers without programming knowledge to easily collect data from Twitter through its public API (Application

Programming Interface). NodeXL communicates with Twitter's REST API and Search API to "pull" tweets on a per-request basis (Gaffney and Pushman, 2014; Granger, 2014). Some clear limitations exist in terms of collecting historical data through the API: queries requested through the Twitter search network cannot return tweets more than 8-9 days old (Social Media Research Foundation, 2016). In addition, for most of the collection period, NodeXL could only retrieve approximately 200 tweets at a time through the Twitter user network. As Granger points out, validity standards should reflect the known limitations of the API and rate limiting, and researchers cannot claim with certainty that they have acquired a full corpus of tweets without having either purchased data through third party vendors or having requested a full copy of tweets from the users themselves (2014:29). As a student researcher, I determined this degree of intrusiveness or expense was not warranted for a mini-dissertation. An extension onto the Microsoft Excel application, NodeXL collects and presents tweets in a structured workbook format with multiple worksheets presenting node and edge-level information (Hansen, Schneiderman, & Smith, 2009). Data from the selected microblogger was collected regularly, on average two times per week, between the months of April and September. In a similar process to Granger (2014), the results of each query were saved into individual documents, analysed, checked for errors, and later merged into a single document.

4 Findings and discussion

Findings and discussion are combined in the following section, because the collection and interpretation of tweets took the form of hermeneutical circles and was conducted as a process. Observation and social network analysis (SNA) techniques were employed here in an exploratory manner, and this process identified a crowdsourced elite microblogger (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). More specifically, the “#whitetip” Twitter network was compiled and analysed here as a Fallist “emerging counterpublic network” (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:397). Using data from this network, I calculated two measures which indicate popularity and influence: In-degree and Betweenness centrality. I propose that tweets by this microblogger provide a window into the “emerging counterpublic network” of Fallists and their “revolution-as-becoming” (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016:397; Molefe, 2015:32). Next, I conducted an interpretive content analysis over the microblogger’s tweets between 1 April and 30 September 2016. Tweets were categorised by one of five evaluative frames, or marked “unclear” when none of these applied. The study explores how Twitter sets the parameters of Fallist communication and resistance. Below, I share these findings and discussion.

4.1 Everyday hashtags and crowdsourced elites: The case of #whitetip

As highlighted above, I dedicated the first phase of the analysis to identifying “focal texts” for the content analysis to follow. I initially believed this exploratory stage would target the accounts of the Fallist movements themselves, in the form of hashtags and campaigns. Focusing primarily on the UCT Rhodes Must Fall Twitter account I was most familiar with, I began noting popular topics and campaigns.

Through observing the movement’s account, I noted particular hashtags that were emergent within a context of everyday resistance. These hashtags were often driven by students who identified with Fallist movements, rather than those formally coordinated by the movements themselves. I share the case of one such hashtag network below that emerged during the exploratory stage of analysis.

A case of this phenomenon emerged in late April 2016, following the circulation of a controversial Facebook post by a South African student activist, who had been active with Oxford University’s Rhodes Must Fall campaign. In this post, the activist shared their account of attending a restaurant near the University of Cape Town along with another friend, who they identified as a UCT RMF activist. According to this retelling of the incident, the latter activist refused to pay a gratuity to their waitress, a white woman, and wrote on the receipt slip that they would only pay a tip once she returned the land. The activist’s post hailed this act as politically defiant, and berated the waitress’s subsequent “white tears.”



Figure 1 RMF tweet on #whitetip

Discussion surrounding the incident emanated widely across social networking sites. A subsequent Facebook post by the waitress circulated online: she described the incident as racist, and suggested that she should not need to atone for the past. News outlets followed up on the incident by interviewing the waitress, who said she was shaken by the rudeness of the activists (Behr, 2016). Her comments were clearly incongruent with the Fallist paradigm, as she made little acknowledgement of her privilege or of ongoing legacies of white supremacy and colonialism. Radio hosts of the “Renegade Report” program responded to the incident by initiating a fundraising campaign on the waitress’s behalf. The campaign raised nearly ZAR 45,000 within a matter of days (Britten, 2016). In the ensuing days, a screenshot of a prior Facebook post by the waitress’s mother circulated, which appeared to imply that South Africa had been better off with “white leaders” during the apartheid era.

By the beginning of May, discussions of the incident and its significance began to circulate within the hashtag “#whitetip” network. On 2 May, Rhodes Must Fall weighed in via its Twitter account. The #whitetip network was primarily driven by perspectives most sympathetic to the Fallist student activists. Many within this network expressed dismay at the selective concern for the waitress, while so many black South Africans remain poverty stricken and structurally marginalised. The posts by the waitress and her mother were labelled racist by many within the network, and these sentiments were amplified through tweets and retweets. #whitetip constituted an “emerging counterpublic network” that arose organically and through affiliation with Fallism (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016; Zappavigna, 2011).

The emergence of #whitetip prompted me to collect tweets and reach deeper insights. Using NodeXL, a total of 709 tweets between the dates of 2 May and 9 May were collected and compiled in the #whitetip network. An initial review of these tweets made it clear that particular individual accounts were central, evidenced by the plethora of retweets and mentions within the network. Using this #whitetip network data, I calculated In-degree and Betweenness centrality metrics through NodeXL, and discovered that one particular individual account (represented as the largest purple node below) was highest in both of these metrics by a substantial margin. The sociograms in Figures 1 and 2 visualise this data from the #whitetip network. Data for these visualisations were collected on 5 May, 7 May, and 9 May, and compiled together

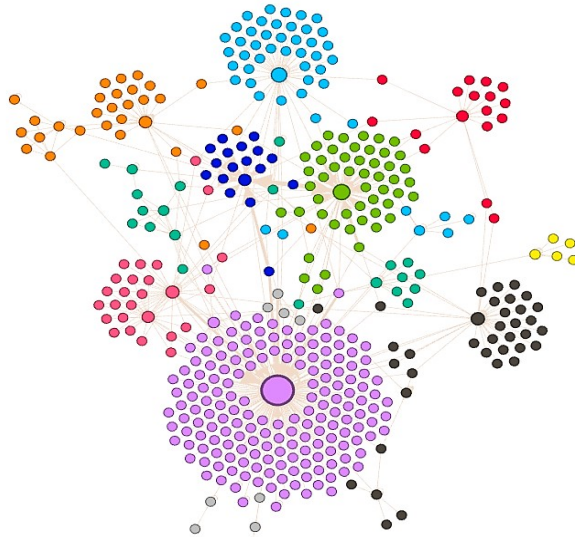


Figure 2 #whitetip network with node size by In-degree

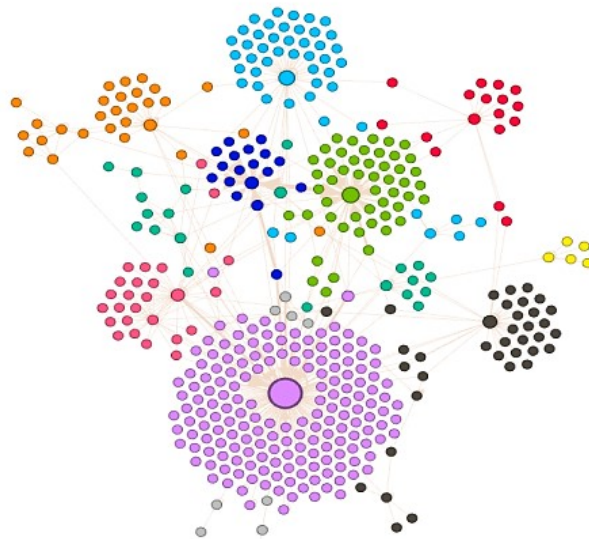


Figure 3 #whitetip network with node size by Betweenness centrality

into a single data set. To generate the visualisations, I exported this data from NodeXL to the Gephi platform, and organised it in a process described by Guibourg (2015). I ran the ForceAtlas2 algorithm through Gephi, which spatializes social network data into “force-directed layout” sociograms that reflect connectivity between nodes (Jacomy et al, 2014). Each node represents a user, and the ties between them represent tweets or mentions. The size of the node was calculated by In-degree for the visualisation on the top and Betweenness centrality for that on the bottom. I also calculated sub-networks, or “communities,” via Gephi’s Modularity function. The colours correspond to these users’ respective communities.

As noted in the methodology section, In-degree and Betweenness centrality are empirical measures of popularity and influence within a network. The fact that one specific microblogger was so prominent in both of these regards, and by similar proportions, is indicative of their crowdsourced elite status within the #whitetip network. In addition, the microblogger's popularity and influence metrics accrued with time, revealing that this status within the #whitetip network developed organically. The prominence of the crowdsourced elite microblogger provided important insights into the structure of communication within Fallist Twitter networks. Through the above visualisations, it is important to note the extent to which discussions in the #whitetip network reverberated within a select number of sub-communities of users, but also that these communities were densely interconnected. This shows that #whitetip convened a virtual community of users and audiences that were like-minded and belonged to similar social networks. The largest nodes in this network demonstrated a considerable amount of social capital within this community. Below, I connect these findings to the theories of connective action and cloud protesting, and provide a rationale for the interpretive content analysis that follows.

Through evaluative language, the initial actions taken by the activists as well as subsequent discussions online developed an implicit affiliation with Fallism, despite not being coordinated by any of the Fallist movements. The link between the #whitetip incident and Fallism more broadly emerged through “cloud protesting” (Milan, 2015b:60) and the logic of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:36). #whitetip surfaced out of personalised action frames rather than collective action frames. For the microbloggers who engaged with #whitetip, “taking public action or contributing to a common good becomes an act of personal expression and recognition or self-validation achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships” (2013:36). The collective identity of Fallists was “an intermediary stage” that filtered self-expression (Milan, 2015b:67).

This logic of cloud protesting and connective action revealed itself both in the context of the initial post, as well as in the discussions that took place through the #whitetip network. The initial incident developed as a spontaneous expression of resistance by the activists, who, through previous engagements, were authorised as purveyors of Fallism. The initial Facebook post validated the political nature of the act, and this was boosted by its proponents' affiliation with Fallism. Within the #whitetip network on Twitter, the broader significance of the incident and its outcomes became attributed by Fallist-aligned microbloggers. Users evaluated its political significance while also deriding the waitress, her mother, and those who fundraised on her behalf. A select few drove these discussions: #whitetip reverberated within a cloud protesting model, in that the perspectives of crowdsourced elites circulated rapidly, on demand, and without centralised coordination by the Fallist movements. RMF and other Fallist movements tweeted about #whitetip, but were not the crowdsourced elites who primarily “brokered” the discussions, nor were

they the most influential users disseminating the discussions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). #whitetip summoned a community of users in the Fallist Twitter network (Milan, 2013:40). Twitter set the parameters of communication and resistance, first by convening discussions within the hashtag, #whitetip, and secondly by affording a network structure for its dissemination. The cloud is a metaphor for the structure of collective action and communication by Fallists in #whitetip: individual self-expression “reverberated” through the Twitter network, harnessing, on demand, a pool of like-minded users who temporarily coalesced around the topic (Milan, 2015:59). Typifying an “idiom hashtag,” #whitetip displayed a great deal of conversational stickiness between users. The controversial quality of #whitetip also added to its persistence, in line with “political hashtags” (Romero, Meeder & Kleinberg, 2011). This process solidified the “crowdsourced elite” status of select microbloggers, and one microblogger in particular. Crowdsourced elites emerged “organically,” rather than as formal or delegated spokespersons for the movements. (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012:276). The crowdsourced elites went beyond discussing the constituent acts surrounding the incident – they evaluated the political significance of #whitetip and attributed values to the individuals involved.

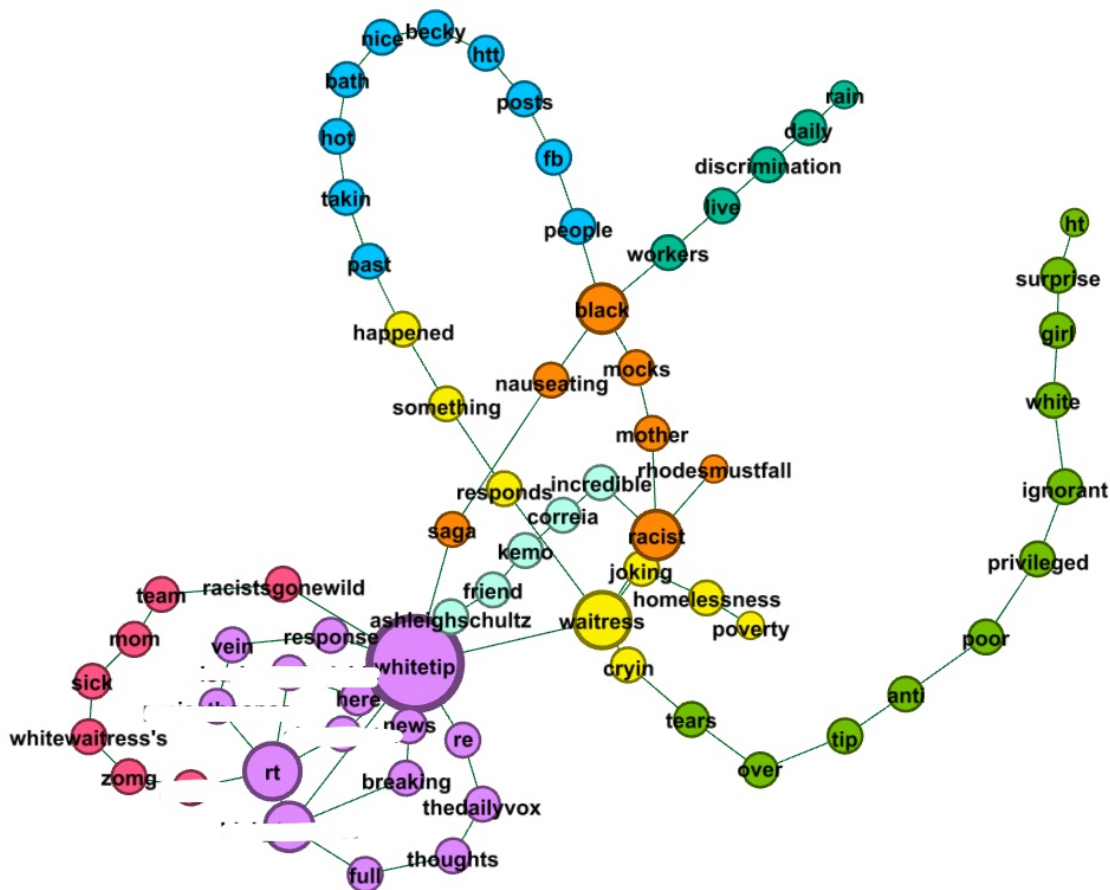


Figure 4 #whitetip semantic network of most common word pairs

In addition to the network structure among users, #whitetip also revealed discursive trends. The tweets circulating throughout the #whitetip network were highly evaluative. This evaluative quality of the tweets became apparent by determining the most frequently appearing word pairs within #whitetip and visualising them as a semantic network. Semantic networks are informed by the idea within lexical linguistics that words in close proximity or co-occurrence with one another indicate semantic relationships. In semantic networks, nodes are populated by textual elements (in this case, words) that are in close proximity. Semantic networks extract meanings within texts as well as the discourse patterns of groups and individuals (Guo, 2016:20). As part of NodeXL's graph metrics function, I calculated the top word pairs within the compiled #whitetip data set. These were then exported to Gephi and, once again by using the ForceAtlas2 algorithm, the semantic network was visualised according to the interconnections between different nodes. Node size was configured by measure of Degree, i.e. the number of connections with other words in the network. The larger the node, the more words were connected to that particular word. Twitter usernames were erased in order to maintain anonymization.

The individual strands of the semantic network consisted of words that made up the most frequently retweeted messages in the network. By identifying these strands, as well as their points of intersection and separation, it became possible to recognise the meanings that were the most popularly attributed within the virtual community of #whitetip. For instance, the word, "black" connected to numerous semantic strands in the network. One of these strands evaluated the waitress' mother as racist due to her aforementioned post about black leaders on Facebook. In another strand, the incident was contrasted with the masses of black workers who face discrimination on an everyday basis, but receive nothing like the amount of coverage and support afforded to the waitress. The contradictory nature of support for the waitress was evaluated as "nauseating." The word, "waitress" connected to a semantic strand in which she was evaluated as anti-poor and ignorant of longstanding inequities that define South African society. Another semantic strand criticised her framing of the incident as responding to things that happened in the "past." Visualising the semantic network of the most common word pairs illustrated the extent to which the semantic relationships in #whitetip were highly evaluative and interconnected.

The research design for this study emerged inductively. The social network analysis techniques employed on #whitetip informed the research design in two main ways: by highlighting both the communication structure among Fallists on Twitter, and the "evaluative language" of the discourse. With regard to the first issue, the overall structure of the network revealed a distinct few "crowdsourced elite" microbloggers. These microbloggers were both influential and popular, as indicated by In-degree and Betweenness centrality metrics. The ideas of the crowdsourced elites "reverberated" (Milan, 2013) within the network. These insights prompted further observation of the crowdsourced elites, and the most

prominent account within the network in particular. The importance of this individual microblogger's account became apparent upon further observation: they were very active on the platform. In addition, on their public feed, the microblogger indicated a sustained engagement with issues of decolonisation and student activism. The individual has also published writings and appeared on programs through other platforms, making their affiliation with Fallism explicit. The prominence of this crowdsourced elite provided insight into the importance of organically emergent thought leaders within the Fallist movements. This directed the analysis towards a focus on an individual and everyday level, rather than a narrow focus on particular topics. This was chosen with an eye towards understanding Fallist discourse in emergence, rather than merely reacting to already-articulated meanings.

Secondly, the evaluative quality of Fallist discourse was evident in the #whitetip network. As a topical hashtag associated with the Fallist movements, #whitetip provide a window into the evaluative language in Fallist discourse. This pattern went against the prerogatives of a unified public sphere as elucidated by Habermas. Instead, language was “used to build power and solidarity by adopting stances and referring to other texts” (Zappavigna, 2011: The tweets that circulated most within the network were those that contravened Habermas’ imperatives of deliberation, communicative reason, and critical-rational debate in the public sphere. The notion of a unified public sphere consisting of all South African citizens did not resonate within the network. The merits of the actions taken by the activists were never up for debate with wider publics, and the discussions largely revolved around the opposing discourses of whiteness and blackness. The #whitetip network can therefore be described as an “emerging counterpublic network” (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016). As a counterpublic, the network fulfilled a “contestatory function” in the context of South Africa’s stratified society (Fraser, 1990:67). #whitetip hailed like-minded Fallists who opposed and circumvented normative speech conventions (Warner, 2002).

There are inherent limitations to studying hashtag networks: they offer ideal “entry points into larger and more complex worlds [...] but it is only by stepping through that window and following individual users that we can begin to place tweets within a broader context” (Bonilla & Rosa 2015:7). I heeded this suggestion in my analysis, deciding to focus on the tweets by this crowdsourced elite microblogger over a sustained period. Below, I share the findings of the interpretive content analysis of this microblogger’s tweets, which were categorised based on their evaluative frames.

4.2 Evaluative frames: Findings and discussion

Through the exploratory process of SNA and observation of hashtag networks, I recognised that Fallist microblogging was highly evaluative. For the content analysis, I recognised that tweets were almost always presented according to one or more of five evaluative frames. I set about analysing the tweets

based on their evaluative frames. Interpretive content analysis was determined as the ideal method with which to “operationalise” the analysis of these frames: the aim here was identifying evaluative frames and then “articulating interpretive links between those behaviours and the larger concepts” (Herring, 2004:14).

Two qualitative research questions were posed in this dissertation:

- I. What kinds of evaluative frames were made by the crowdsourced elite microblogger?
- II. How did Twitter set the parameters of the microblogger’s communication and resistance?

The interpretive content analysis emerged out of inductive categorisation. Inductive categorisation was chosen here because it is best employed where little pre-existing knowledge exists about a phenomenon under study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007:113). Theoretical concepts were later adapted in order to make sense of and contextualise these categories. Although each of the categories was sufficiently distinct, the tweets often contained multiple evaluative frames. As a result, my analysis allowed for two categories to be assigned to any given tweet. This approach is consistent with qualitative content analysis procedures, since texts can only be interpreted as a whole by understanding constituent parts (Kuckartz, 2014:72). However, where this double categorisation applied, I still distinguished between primary and secondary categories. I identified five recurring categories (plus “unclear” tweets), and each of these frames are described below. A total of 1,688 tweets by the microblogger (excluding retweets) were categorised over a six-month sample period between April and September 2016. Both manifest and latent meanings informed the categorisation of evaluative frames. Below, I present the findings of this process by primary category. Categories are sorted in descending order of appearance.

Table 1: Evaluative Frames (April - September 2016)

Primary evaluative frame	Number of tweets	Percentage of tweets	Number of tweets with secondary category	Percentage of tweets with secondary category
Resentment (RE)	500	30%	62	12.5%
Pride and care (PR)	447	26%	33	7%
Play (PL)	321	19%	79	27%
Exasperation and trauma (EX)	185	11%	10	21%
Mobilising (MO)	130	8%	27	5%
Unclear (UC)	105	6%	0	0%
Total	1688	100%	211	12.5% (of total tweets)

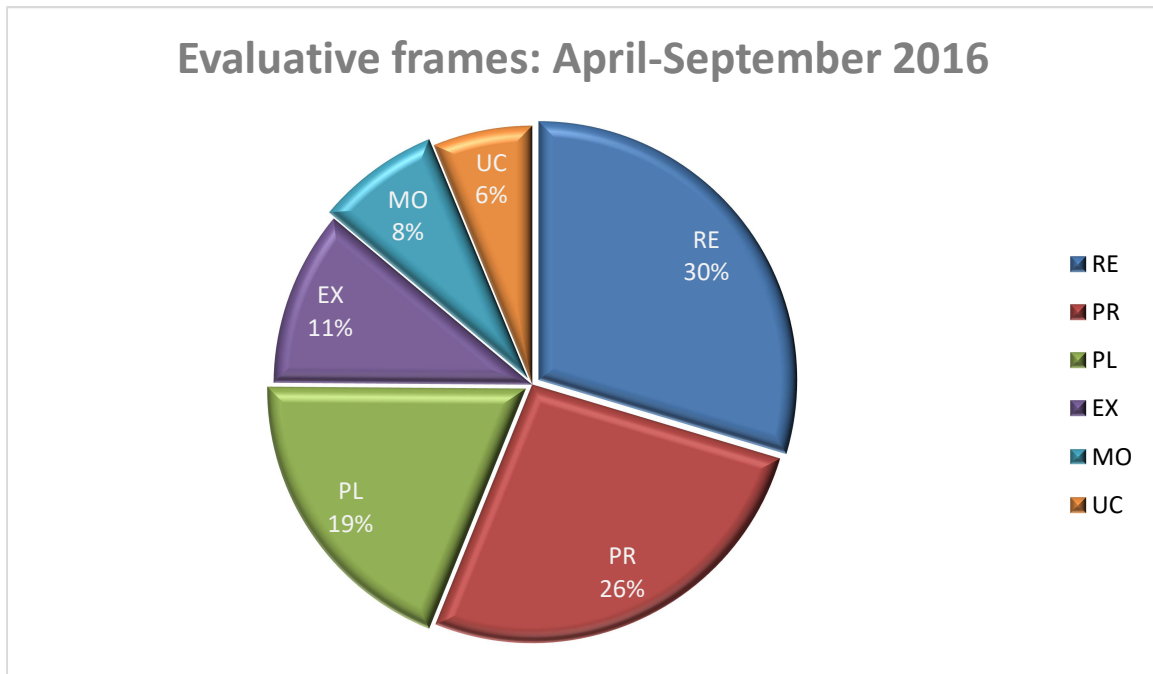


Figure 5 Evaluative frames by percentage

4.2.1 Resentment (RE)

Oxford Dictionary defines “resentment” in interpersonal terms, as “bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly” (“resentment,” 2017). Through the process of categorisation, resentment emerged as a recurring evaluative framework through which indignation was expressed and directed towards dominant groups and individuals who perpetuated oppression. A total of 500 tweets, or 30% of the tweets in the sample, were categorised here as expressing resentment as their primary frame. This finding reveals that resentment was the most common evaluative frame in the analysis.

The microblogger expressed their resentment through Twitter-specific forms “communal disassociation” (Smith-Prei & Stehle, 2016:119). The microblogger targeted their resentment at institutions and individuals who exemplified, perpetuated or normalised the suffering of marginalised people. These targets were evaluated here as the beneficiaries or perpetrators of white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism. The microblogger testified to the fact that these structures remain entrenched and experienced in an everyday setting by those who inhabit the most marginalised positions within social hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. A number of distinctive discourse behaviours were offered along with this frame: terms for the targets of resentment were clearly mediated by Twitter as a platform.

Much of this resentment that was visible in the data connected to existing interventions by political theorists on “*ressentiment*.” In a broad sense, *ressentiment* names the “anger directed against enemies we

blame for our suffering” (Dolgert, 2016). Despite frequent association with the political right, *ressentiment* also has a notable presence within leftist political movements (Dolgert, 2016; Salée, 2011). *Ressentiment* is a discursive element in which speakers reflect on dynamics of power and exclusion. It is driven by “a language emphasising the incontrovertible need for retribution in reprisal for past injustices,” and has developed as a major mobilisation tool among protest movements made up of marginalised groups (Salée, 2011:479). *Ressentiment* aims at shaming those responsible for the injury, such that they retract or cede the power that derives from injustice (Salée, 2011:480).

There are some notable patterns of these tweets. The microblogger articulated their resentment in an everyday and intersectional context. Oppressions were identified as overlapping and mutually constitutive. The microblogger nimbly addressed topics as they arose, in real time, attributed responsibility and evaluated their significance as well as the forms of oppression they perpetuated. Twitter set the parameters for the words that were used most often by the microblogger: these words both evaluated and indexed the targets of resentment, and were easily disseminated within Twitter’s 140 character limits (e.g. “1652s,” “Beckys,” and “hoteps”). This provides an example of the way that Twitter both enables and constrains the practice of microblogging. Below, I identify recurring themes and targets of resentment in the tweets and discuss their relation to Twitter as a platform.

Whiteness: Whiteness was the most frequent target of the resentment in the sample of tweets. The microblogger identified whites as settlers, or “1652s,” who continue to benefit from the ongoing legacies of colonialism and white supremacy. Twitter enabled the microblogger to call out and speak back to a litany of publicised anti-black and arrogant attitudes expressed by white people. Twitter afforded the microblogger to nimbly address these instances whenever they surfaced, by mentioning (using “@”) the perpetrators directly and also engaging a network of like-minded Fallists.

Resentment was expressed through emergent repertoires that are distinctive to Twitter and SNSs. In cases like #whitetip, resentment was framed in terms of “dragging,” or publicly humiliating, the perpetrators. Dragging was often directed towards white women, or “Beckys,” who the microblogger called out for their perceived ignorance, entitlement to answers or conversation and explanation, or arrogance. The #whitetip waitress was one target of this kind of resentment, and was evaluated by the microblogger as privileged and anti-poor. Another example took place in late June, after a sermon by Pastor Andre Olivier surfaced, in which he claimed that white South Africans were wealthy because they were hard workers and “took nothing from no one” (News24, 2016). The microblogger directly confronted Olivier over this claim through Twitter, following an attempted apology on his part. They described Olivier and his church as colonial and racist, and threatened to “shut down” the church in a similar manner to universities.

Resentment was also directed towards the microblogger: The microblogger would periodically respond to incendiary and hateful rhetoric directed towards them by other users, publicising their statements and addressing them in a resentful yet dismissive manner. This illustrates the extent to which Twitter resentment not only enabled, but also constrained the microblogger at times. In other cases, the microblogger simply refused to engage in debate or explain their positions with white people. This was addressed by the microblogger in a hostile manner, and interpreted as entitlement to engagement on issues concerning decolonisation in which white people had no place. Twitter enabled the microblogger to selectively engage on their own terms.

The political establishment: A great deal of resentment on the part of the microblogger was also directed at political leaders, particularly within the ANC, for their contradictory stances and their ineptitude in implementing radical decolonial change. Again, Twitter's addressivity tools enabled the microblogger to directly call out failure and hypocrisy. On Youth Day, 16 June, the microblogger criticised the hypocrisy in celebrating students from 1976 whilst contemporary Fallist students faced expulsions from their own institutions. In a similar evaluative frame, the celebration of Women's Day was declared deeply problematic given that the President himself was accused of rape, enabled by various elements within the party, and given the indignities of harassment and violence faced by South African women. The microblogger attributed myriad failures of the present to inadequate demands during the democratic transition. The ANC was described by the microblogger as a "gatekeeper" of whiteness and white capital. In addition, the microblogger was suspicious and resentful of the student "leaders" of the preceding Fees Must Fall movement who had covert ties to the political establishment. These self-appointed leaders, many of whom were connected to the Student Representative Councils of universities, had held covert discussions with political leaders. These individuals were evaluated as most responsible for the stemming of student protest in 2015 following the announcement of the 0% tuition increase.

Helen Zille: A common target of this resentment was Helen Zille, the former Mayor of Cape Town, Premier of the Western Cape, and leader of the Democratic Alliance. Zille has received a great deal of criticism in recent years over a range of controversial tweets and Twitter rows (Serino, 2013; Witten and Dodds, 2016), and this continued to surface during the sample period. The microblogger directed their resentment towards Zille on a number of occasions. Zille was evaluated as an avatar of whiteness, liberalism, privilege, and racist attitudes. Zille was evaluated here as a "Becky" par excellence, and a ruthless political operator who used her political platform to the detriment of the people. One example of this resentment emerged following Zille promoting her book on Twitter, "Not without a fight." The microblogger Signified upon the hashtag, #notwithoutafight to condemn Zille's track record and struggle credentials.



Helen Zille @helenzille · 3 Aug 2016

If this woke bunch hate being UCT students so much, pls help them out of their misery and withdraw their funding. pic.twitter.com/MnfdFVWB11

530

448

344

In July, Zille, tweeted that she viewed, among the most pressing issues in education, unaccountable teachers and absent fathers. The microblogger responded by condemning Zille's inattention to structural inequality and referring to her as a "cave Becky." In August, Zille was a target of resentment over a tweet in which she criticised student Fallists and suggested their funding be withdrawn. The microblogger responded with a litany tweets directed at Zille, referring to her as anti-black, colonial, and hypocritical. The microblogger resolved to attack white supremacy and evaluated Zille as the antithesis of the Fallist paradigm. Twitter enabled the microblogger to add their voice to a chorus of resentment directed towards Zille.

Cis-het men: Cis-gendered and heterosexual men were a common target of resentment by the microblogger. Cis-het men were highlighted by the microblogger for exhibiting dangerous and violent masculinity on a regular basis, especially in the form of attitudes of entitlement to women's bodies. While white supremacy loomed over many of these discussions, cis-het black men were frequent targets of this resentment. The microblogger frequently criticised the patriarchal and heteronormative attitudes exhibited by "hotebs" and other black male comrades in the student movements. One example of this was in April, when the microblogger tweeted about a "secret meeting" at Wits University which they suggested queer and black women were excluded from. In another instance in July, the microblogger responded to another student activist who dismissed Feminism as a European confusion, and proceeded to sharply challenge them.

4.2.2 Pride and care (PR)

Oxford Dictionary defines "pride" as "a feeling of deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's own achievements, the achievements of one's close associates, or from qualities or possessions that are widely admired" ("Pride," 2017). Care refers to "the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something" ("Care," 2017). I determined that 447, or 26%, of the tweets in the sample, exhibited PR as their primary evaluative frame.

This evaluative frame is conceived in broad terms. In the process of condensing the categories, I determined that, in this context, pride and care expressed a common evaluative frame: These tweets constituted acts of "self-care," in that they were designed to "create conditions supporting the individual's functioning and integrity" (Gallegos, 1997:8). I adapt this definition to the extent that tweets did not have

to be limited to the individual level: Self-care consisted of supporting the functioning and integrity of anyone with whom the microblogger identified. I describe prevailing themes of the pride and care tweets below.

Pride for students and protest: Protesting student Fallists were often the subject of prideful evaluations on the part of the microblogger. Twitter provided the platform to directly address and hail these Fallists. These tweets were often expressed within the context of emerging hashtag networks surrounding Fallist movements. Where protests aligned with the Fallist paradigm, the microblogger expressed solidarity, pride and care for those involved. A major example of this was visible in the early stages of the sample period, amidst protests at the University currently known as Rhodes. These protests were coordinated through the #RUPreferenceList campaign: feminist students demanded changes be made to the university's sexual assault policies, and released the names of alleged rapists on campus. The microblogger expressed deep satisfaction, raving about these black women's resolve and courage in challenging patriarchal structures. Similar sentiments were shared by the microblogger on Youth Day, 16 June, over protesting RMF students who disrupted a UCT event on campus. Another instance of deep satisfaction surrounding student protesters was evident in late August. These followed protests by students at Pretoria Girls High School, where staff members had forbid female pupils from attending classes with natural hair styles. This triggered protests among students at the school, and these protests were publicised over SNSs through the hashtag, “#stopracismatpretoriagirlshigh.” This movement motivated similar protests at schools across the nation. The microblogger expressed deep satisfaction over the protests, and commended the students for confronting white supremacist attitudes head-on.

While hailing the acts of students at these institutions, they also pointed out the extent to which protests at historically white institutions continued to monopolise media coverage. They placed the history of student resistance at historically black institutions at the forefront. Despite continued radical energies, student protesters from these institutions remained at the periphery of the public consciousness. Twitter afforded the platform for the microblogger to amplify the accomplishments of more marginalised student movements and bypassed the inherent biases of traditional media outlets.

A number of tweets concerning student protest expressed care to a greater extent than pride. The microblogger frequently offered encouragement to fellow students over the platform. A notable instance of this was visible in September, as new #FeesMustFall protests were getting underway. The microblogger shared a series of tweets emphasising the importance of self-care, cautioning against the tendency to feel pressured into protest by fellow students. This stream of tweets used the platform as a tool to communicate with potential protesters *en masse*, beyond the boundaries of any particular

movement, and share lessons learned from first-hand experience in Fallist movements. Twitter provided the networked structure for disseminating these insights. This stream of tweets was emblematic of an “intimate public sphere” (Berlant, 2008). For Berlant, intimate public spheres derive from “an ongoing potential for relief from the hard, cold world” (Berlant, 2008:7-8). Twitter affords a context for Fallists to exercise self-care in a “juxtapolitical” context that is networked yet also nurturing to the Fallist community online. Tweets such as the above stream arose in proximity to political mobilisation, but were framed more as a “*relief from the political.*” Tweets here worked like “resources for providing and maintaining the experience of collectivity” (Berlant, 2008:10) outside of a formal movement context.

Self-pride: The microblogger received a great deal of prideful remarks directed towards them through Twitter, as well. One Twitter user suggested the microblogger deserved consideration for South African “Twitter awards” due to their frequent contributions. Another user added the microblogger should run for the Presidency in future, while a third stated the microblogger as one of the main reasons they checked Twitter regularly. The microblogger themselves tweeted about their appearance on a television program, and responded directly to followers that expressed support. These tweets clearly demonstrated that microblogging had cultivated a degree of “micro-celebrity” online, over the course of their tweets being widely broadcast (Page, 2012).

The black diaspora: Twitter enabled the microblogger to reach beyond Fallist counterpublics and communicate with members of the black diaspora. The microblogger took to Twitter to commemorate and honour a range of figures within the black diaspora. Prideful tributes to Afeni Shakur and Muhammad Ali were shared following their passing in May and June respectively. For the microblogger, the significance of these figures was heightened by their attention to struggles faced by diasporic people. The microblogger also tweeted pridefully about Caster Semenya’s Olympic victory in Rio. The microblogger greeted Semenya’s success as a victory for black queer women on the world stage. They resolved to tweet everything positive they could find about the athlete, amplifying Semenya as a towering figure within the diaspora. The microblogger also directly engaged members of the black diaspora through the Twitter platform. In August, they released a stream of tweets directed at African Americans. These tweets challenged African Americans as a collective for perceived inattention to the diaspora, while encouraging them to more deeply engage with struggles in South Africa and other parts of the continent. The microblogger expressed pride to the extent that they had themselves taken the time to become informed of African American history, literature, and accomplishments. The plea for others to similarly inform themselves was not framed in resentful terms, but as a way of improving the “functioning and integrity” (Gallegos, 1998) of the black diaspora. Twitter set the parameters for this communication by convening “sparsely knit networks of associates” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012:12).

4.2.3 Play (PL)

Oxford Dictionary defines “play” as an “activity engaged in for enjoyment and recreation” (“play,” 2017). In a broad sense, tweets were categorised as PL when they expressed humorous sentiments. Papacharissi’s writings provided a stronger conceptual background for this category. Papacharissi drew from Schechner’s (2002) work on play and performance. These theorists understood play in terms of the “restructuring of restored behaviours” (2014:103). As categorised here, play encompassed “plays on phatic conventions, variations of social ritual, and variations of established everyday social routines” (Papacharissi, 2014:103). Play is conceptualised here as a performative act. Signifyin’s characteristic rhetorical games and suspended meanings were evident within these PL tweets (Gates, 2014). Twitter provided an ideal platform for the microblogger to playfully engage across a range of issues. Much like the pride and care tweets, I interpret many of these PL tweets as a “relief from the political” (Berlant, 2008:10). These tweets arose “in proximity” to politicised matters, but they largely refrained from inciting any kind of collective action (2008:x). Altogether, 19% of the sample, 321 tweets, expressed play as the primary evaluative frame. Of all the primary categories, PL tweets were most often accompanied by a secondary evaluative frame. 27% of these tweets contained a secondary category, and resentment emerged as the most frequent secondary category. This directed me towards Signifyin’ as a cultural prevailing convention displayed in the tweets. I identify the prevailing themes below.

Playing whiteness: The theme of whiteness again provided fertile ground for the microblogger’s self-expression on Twitter. Through their tweets, they playfully prodded and “signified upon” whiteness (Brock, 2012). While resentment bubbled under the surface, the tweets themselves largely refrained from inciting any kind of mobilisation. Play was expressed through “restructuring restored behaviours” (Papacharissi, 2014). This was made visible, for instance, when the microblogger coined the term, “whiting,” as a verb. “Whiting” was deployed as a way of evaluating the actions and ideologies of individuals as emblematic of their whiteness. In a similar vein, the microblogger responded to a tweet which asked users what kind of imaginary web application they wished they could have. The microblogger responded by describing an app which detected terms like “colourblind” and “Rainbow Nation” and erased their usage from the public domain. In another instance, the microblogger tweeted and captioned an image of Caster Semenya after she captured her Olympic victory. The image depicted Semenya standing beside her competitors to congratulate them on the race, while they did not make eye contact and appeared dejected following their loss. The microblogger provided a brief caption of the image, evaluating it as a sign of bitterness from the white athletes over their inability to cash in on white privilege. Shortly afterwards, they tweeted another image of Semenya and the other medallists in their awards ceremony, who were also African women. The microblogger explained this image as

representative of the way they planned to enter white feminist spaces in the future. Through these tweets, the microblogger playfully engaged with the significance of the event: “restored behaviours” of the non-medalling athletes following their loss were restructured as symbolic of white privilege. The constraints of Twitter in the form of character limits set parameters for terms like “whiting” to be articulated.

Political play: Many of the PL tweets generated by the microblogger were responsive to South African party politics, and especially the nationwide Local Government Election campaign. Slogans and behaviours that originated from the campaign became sites of playful inversion and Signifyin’, taking on new and implied meanings. These slogans referenced “restored behaviours” that were restructured over Twitter in a humorous manner. A primary example of this form of play was evident in the microblogger’s references to what they called “Asinavalo Twitter” during the campaign. They were referring to the slogan, “#asinavalo” (meaning “we are not afraid”), which circulated on ANC campaign materials during this period as a statement of confidence in ANC leadership. As Election Day grew closer and ANC support was falling behind, however, South African Twitter users began playfully inverting the hashtag into “#sinovalo,” meaning “we are afraid” (Kunene, 2016). The microblogger used the term, “Asinavalo Twitter,” as a signifier for those who supported the ANC’s mandate and leadership. The microblogger likened Asinavalo Twitter to a barely afloat ship, and to the violin players in the film, *Titanic*, who continued playing music even as the vessel was inevitably sinking. Similar to #asinavalo, “dabbing” was frequently referred to by the microblogger as a “playfully multivalent interlocutor” (Brock, 2016:6). A popular dance move that ANC leaders used during the campaign, the microblogger employed the term as a shorthand signifier of the ANC and its perceived ineffectiveness. Twitter enabled the microblogger to engage in politicised and everyday forms of resistance within a playful context: these tweets were highly intertextual and their impact was enhanced by the brevity demanded by microblogging. This became clear through the hashtag network, “#electionliterature.” The #electionliterature hashtag was coined by Abantu Book Festival, a new South African festival focusing on black writers and readers. Abantu’s Twitter profile encouraged other users to tweet about South African politics by referencing and restructuring the titles of black novels and speeches. The microblogger responded by playfully inserting the word “dab” into a number of titles. #electionliterature was emblematic of Signifyin’ on Black Twitter, referencing cultural touchpoints within the parameters of the hashtag. Another example of this approach to tweeting was clear in the form of “#tweetlikegwede.” This hashtag emerged in response to statements by ANC Secretary General, Gwede Mantashe, that if he was Minister of Education, he would close down universities in order to “teach student protesters a lesson” (Evans, 2016). The microblogger used #tweetlikegwede to highlight the perceived arrogance of Mantashe’s logic, but did so indirectly by restructuring restored behaviour. Using the hashtag, the microblogger tweeted that public toilets should be

removed due to protests over inadequate sanitation, and schools closed due to protests over colonial education. These tweets resisted the ANC in a playful manner through Signifyin.’ These tweets were highly intertextual, referencing “cultural touchpoints of humour, spectacle, or crisis” (Brock, 2012:537). Through hashtags like #asinavalo, #electionliterature, and #tweetlikegwede, the microblogger dissed and signified upon the ANC: meanings were suspended rather than explicitly provided. These hashtags were used as a “playfully multivalent interlocutor” (Brock, 2016:6).

4.2.4 Mobilising (MO)

The Oxford definition of “mobilise” is to “organise and encourage (a group of people) to take collective action in pursuit of a particular objective” (“mobilise,” 2017). Tweets were categorised this way whenever they incited or encouraged any kind of collective action. With regard to MO tweets, the content analysis helped to clarify the relative absence of tweets pertaining to mobilisation. A total of 130 tweets fit the description of MO tweets, which made up only 8% of the total sample. Relative to the other categories, mobilisation tweets were a rare evaluative frame within the sample of tweets.

MO tweets as “cloud protesting”: With few exceptions, the microblogger did not use the platform to directly contribute to the coordination of collective action campaigns. Instead, the microblogger encouraged mobilisation through the Twitter platform itself, by publicising and amplifying the actions of other Fallists. The protests they discussed were often not conducted in physical proximity to themselves; instead, they used Twitter to lobby support and awareness remotely and on behalf of principal protesters. This approach to mobilising was also highly individualised, consisting of direct tweets to people both within and outside of Fallist movements. An example of this was evident in April, following a physical altercation at Wits University between men involved in the Fees Must Fall movement and another protester, whom the microblogger indicated they knew personally and identified as a Black queer woman. While not physically present during the altercation, the microblogger tweeted about it, described it as an assault, and named the apparent perpetrators. The microblogger tweeted @ accounts beyond Fallists in order to make the incident more publicly visible: they tweeted media outlets in order to prompt them to cover the event, and also tweeted the political parties to whom the male protesters apparently belonged, asking them to condemn the acts. Subsequent to the altercation, photos surfaced which appeared to depict these men shoving and grabbing the other protester. The microblogger continued tweeting about the incident by using the hashtag, “#notmyFMF.” The microblogger tweeted #notmyFMF and requested others who opposed violence to do the same. The way the microblogger responded to this incident was emblematic of a “cloud protesting” and “connective action” model in two ways: firstly, the microblogger highlighted the emerging protest remotely, rather than through local participation. The microblogger tweeted to organisations and individuals independently, and this communication was not “brokered” by

the movements themselves (although RMF later joined the chorus of #notmyFMF) (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Milan, 2015a). Second, the framing of the incident was highly individualised, and took place between prominent individuals in the student movement (Milan, 2015a). #notmyFMF was highly indicative of “connective action,” in that the hashtag invited Fallists to engage through personalised action frames. In activist hashtags like #notmyFMF, “taking public action or contributing to a common good becomes an act of personal expression and recognition or self-validation achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:36). Hashtags like #notmyFMF typified this connective action model. Twitter’s brand of connective action set the stage for Fallist mobilisation and engagement. Elsewhere, the microblogger reached out to other users in their network to support ongoing protests and sign petitions online. A number of the MO reflected on the idea that protesters at historically Black institutions received far less media coverage than those at UCT or Wits. Twitter enabled the microblogger to remotely live-tweet about underrepresented protests.

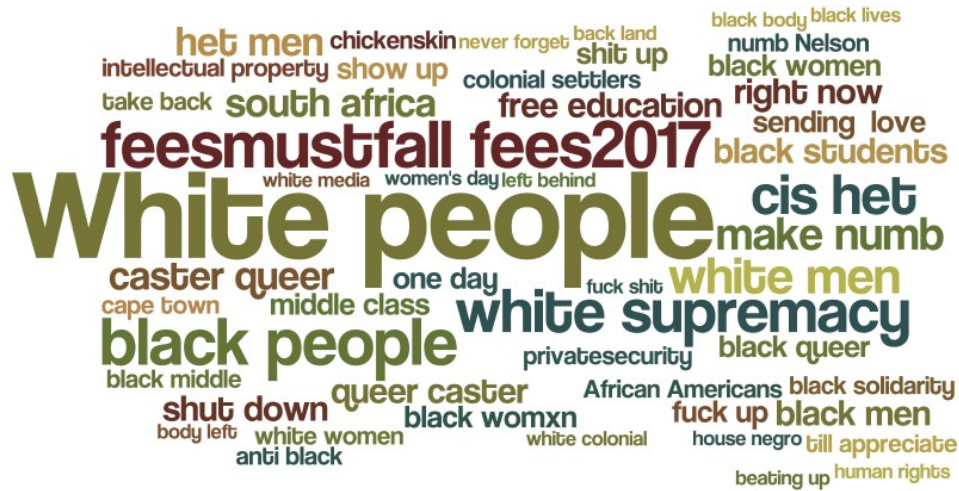
4.2.5 Exasperation and trauma (EX)

“Exasperation” is defined as “the feeling of being annoyed, especially because you can do nothing to solve a problem” (“exasperation,” 2017). Oxford Dictionary defines trauma as “a deeply distressing or disturbing experience” (“trauma,” 2017). At first glance, these two evaluations may seem rather different, and indeed were initially coded separately. However, they were condensed during the analysis period, in part because they appeared infrequently, but mainly because they described a similar evaluative frame: the combination of distress at given circumstances along with a lack of control to change the situation. Tweets categorised as EX therefore evaluated a negation of agency due to structural exclusion, erasure, or apathy. Frequent topics that were addressed in these tweets included male entitlement, triggering behaviours, and the prevalence of passivity among Black people in the face of white supremacy. Expressions of exasperation formed an “affective scene” for the “intimate public sphere” that was nurtured by PR and PL tweets (Berlant, 2008:7).

4.3 Top word pairs

Figure 7 below visualises the most salient word pairs in the sample of tweets. Using NodeXL’s graph metrics functions, I calculated the most frequently appearing word pairs within the sample of tweets. Using Wordle, I visualised these pairs in the form of a weighted word map. This means that the size of the text indicates the frequency of the pairs. Each of these pairs was tweeted a minimum of four times by the microblogger. By noting these most frequently appearing word pairs, it becomes clear that the microblogger addressed a select number of recurring topics in their tweets and that the tweets share some prevailing trends. “White people” was the most recurring word pair. Related top word pairs include, in

descending order, “white supremacy,” “white men,” and “colonial settlers,” as well as “white women,” “anti-black,” “white colonial” and “white media.” The prevalence of word pairs with a direct relation to whiteness reflects an abiding focus on whiteness on the part of the microblogger. The centrality of



whiteness to the microblogger corroborates the findings of the content analysis, which included the insight that “resentment” was the most common primary evaluative frame within the sample of tweets and whiteness the most prominent target of resentment. “Black people” was also among the frequent word pairs in the sample, and clearly relates to other pairs like “black students,” “black women,” “black womxn,” “black men,” “black body,” and “black lives.” Evaluative word pairs such as “feesmustfall fees2017,” “shut down,” “show up,” “one day,” “take back” and “never forget” all indicate the extent to which the microblogger communicated everyday resistance within a Fallist framework. The word pairs here also index each of the three levels of the Collins’s matrix of domination: the micro-level of personal experience is represented in pairs like “sending love,” the meso- or communal-level of social groups is represented heavily here, especially with regard to racial and gender oppression, and the macro-level oppression is also visible with particular reference to universities (Collins, 1998; Knight Steele, 2016; Carastathis, 2016). Insights from the interpretive content make possible a more contextualised understanding of these pairs in terms of abiding evaluative frames.

5 Conclusion

This study explored the use of Twitter by a microblogger who has emerged organically as a “crowdsourced elite” among Fallists (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). I proposed that this microblogger exemplifies the repertoires of communication and resistance that pervade within the “emerging counterpublic networks” of Fallists on Twitter (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016). In accordance with the Fallist paradigm, this study found that the microblogger reconfigured rational–critical understandings of the public sphere and asserted an embodied, marginal subjectivity within it. This microblogger disturbed the normative procession of the public sphere through everyday resistance, which is based on contesting domination in informal and immediate ways (Haynes and Prakash, 1991; Scott, 1985). All three levels of the “matrix of domination” were addressed in these tweets: the micro-level of personal experience, the meso level of social groups, and the macro-level oppression of institutions (Collins, 1998; Knight Steele, 2016; Carastathis, 2016).

The bulk of this analysis focused on this “crowdsourced elite” microblogger’s tweets over a six-month period; these tweets provide a window into Fallist microblogging at its current stage. The qualitative content analysis method employed here yielded a preponderance of select “evaluative frames” guiding these tweets, which interpreted reality and declared stances on issues through evaluative language (Papacharissi, 2014; Pointer, 2015; Zappavigna, 2011). I established that three-quarters of the tweets in the sample belonged to one of three evaluative frames: resentment, pride and care, and play, and that a remaining 19% fit either mobilising or exasperation/trauma frames. Many of these tweets connect to particular repertoires of everyday resistance, while others supported a “relief from the political” (Berlant, 2008). Despite the aversion to hierarchical leadership within Fallist movements and their networks, Twitter enabled the microblogger to elevate their profile and influence organically. Twitter’s character limits invited distinct practices geared towards everyday resistance like hashtag activism, connective action, dragging and Signifyin.

Prior to the content analysis, observation and social network analysis (SNA) of the #whitetip network offered important insights into the workings of Fallists’ everyday resistance and the technological affordances of microblogging. The “#whitetip” hashtag emerged in the fallout from an encounter between Fallist-affiliated activists and a waitress in Cape Town, in which the activists declined to pay the waitress a gratuity. The subsequent circulation of a Facebook post by one of the activists retelling the incident sparked national attention, and convened an active group of users discussing the topic on Twitter. I collected tweets containing the hashtag between 2 May and 9 May. #whitetip exhibited the conversational quality of “idiom hashtags” combined with the controversial quality of “political hashtags.” As a result,

the hashtag attained both “stickiness” and “persistence” (Romero, Meeder & Kleinberg, 2011). Cloud computing provides an analogy for the structure of resistance and communication within #whitetip: individual self-expression ‘reverberated’ through the Twitter network, harnessing, on demand, a pool of like-minded users who temporarily coalesced around the topic (Mell & Grance, 2011; Milan, 2015). #whitetip was emblematic of an emerging brand of “connective action” that thrives on personal action frames, self-expression, and validation from like-minded others (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013:36). Through #whitetip, microbloggers circulated an evaluative discourse designed to build power and solidarity by adopting shared stances (Zappavigna, 2011:194). Challenging the waitress, her mother, and their supporters online, these Twitter users engaged in personalised acts of everyday resistance that are characteristic of Fallism’s revolution-as-becoming. In addition, the overall structure of the #whitetip network revealed the aforementioned “crowdsourced elite” microblogger (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). This microblogger was both influential and popular within the #whitetip network, as indicated by high In-degree and Betweenness centrality metrics, and both of these measures accrued from the start until the end of the weeklong sample period.

Twitter sets the parameters for Fallist microblogging in some important ways: it facilitates a brand of networked individualism that personalises communication and resistance. This can be harnessed into “micro-celebrity” online, which rewards particular microbloggers for their “crowdsourced” thought leadership (Page, 2012; Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). On Twitter, individuals often exercise their agency from within the context of the traditionally “intimate” sphere (Chun, 2016; Papacharissi, 2010). The Twitter platform encourages users to “feel their way into politics,” and to circulate “affectively-charged expression” online in a way that may not yet be explicitly articulated (Papacharissi, 2014:118; Papacharissi, 2016:308). These features go against the imperatives of “deliberative politics” and “rational-critical debate” that are central to Habermas’s idealised public sphere (Habermas, 1991; Habermas, 1994). Microblogging is practiced within the particular “techno-social context” of networked publics, which consist of localised social networks combined with imagined audiences (boyd, 2011; Dobson, 2016; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Microbloggers can temporarily coalesce around topics on Twitter, and leave “digital footprints” in the process (Papacharissi, 2014:127). Finally, cultural conventions and technological affordances collide on Twitter, resulting in communities like Black Twitter and practices like Signifyin’ (Brock, 2012).

I have strived here to combine theoretical insight with empirical findings. This dissertation prioritised “deeper data” in digital media studies, by undertaking qualitative social media research and focusing on a relatively small sample size (Brock, 2015). However, elements of the research design have limited the study’s reach. Future studies may allow for more longitudinal commitment than was possible given my

constraints as a student researcher. These future studies could highlight larger hashtag networks and more microbloggers. Incorporating cyberethnographic methods along with the ones employed here would enable researchers to interrogate the meanings of practices with microbloggers themselves through “theories of doing” (Senft, 2013). Experimental methodologies like ethnography may also clarify the connection between online and offline thought leadership among microbloggers’ audiences. Consistent with a mini-dissertation, I did not strive for theory-building in my analysis. However, the interpretive content analysis method could have been extended further into grounded theory through “axial coding,” which explores relationships *between* categories (Cho & Lee, 2015:8). For instance, the study revealed that a large number of tweets contained both primary and secondary evaluative frames, the most common combination being resentment (RE) and play (PL). The constant comparison required by grounded theory may have yielded a more comprehensive theory of Fallist microblogging discourse rooted in concepts of disturbance and reimagination. In addition, the ethical prerogatives of the study mandated an anonymization of the microblogger’s published tweets. However, given the consent of microbloggers themselves, future studies may be enhanced by directly citing “micro-level linguistic phenomena” within tweets (Herring, 2004:2). Zappavigna’s (2011; 2012) work, for instance, uses a schema for the textual analysis of tweets that incorporates structural and corpus linguistic approaches. Looking at the specific “linguistic choices” made by microbloggers within tweets allows researchers to uncover persisting patterns or routines of meaning construction within Fallist discourse (Zappavigna, 2011:795).

This research explored online Fallist resistance at an early stage of its development. To my knowledge, very limited scholarship has yet been published on “Fallism” as such, and there are no other studies tackling Fallist microblogging outside the context of specific protest campaigns. In attempting to flesh out and patch together disparate concepts and findings, I have developed a renewed appreciation for the “bricolage” required in qualitative research. This dissertation is an initial foray into Fallist networks and microblogging; sustaining student movements will generate more Fallist microblogging, and will provide fertile ground for future research. I look forward to following these new trajectories on Fallist communication.

6 References (Harvard UCT style)

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